

# THIS IS NOT a commodity

ISSUE 0 NUMBER 1

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The Love and Rage Collective in Canberra was set up soon after the S11 protests in Melbourne, September 2000. The collective engages in the theoretical and practical activity of critiquing the capitalist society that is within and around us. To that end we see the need for revolutionaries to cohere and organise with the aim of leaving capitalism behind. As the struggle against Neo-Liberalism expands both in Australia and across the globe, we hope and work toward its development as an explicitly anti-capitalist movement.

To behave as a revolutionary is to be revolutionary in our behaviour. Its not enough to 'build' a party if the emptiness and frustrations of our everyday lives are not addressed in a radical fashion. To develop the threads of a critique of capitalist society is to begin the creation of an alternative life in the here and now, for ourselves as a part of our everyday lives. This is the real secret of the so-called 'struggle for socialism' rather than the far off - and rapidly receding - point of victory, as it is too often cast.

We are interested in developing the threads of our anti-capitalist activity into the broadest possible base for acting as revolutionaries. Through creating alternative medias, counter-cultural events, discussion groups, creative activities with no other purpose than to realise ourselves as thinking and feeling beings, we begin to create a space that not only nurtures our struggle against the insane anti-human organisation of capitalist society, but helps us create the type of life that we desire right here and right now. To draw the aspects of our life together in a collective and organised fashion helps to give form and coherence to our struggle and ourselves as social individuals.

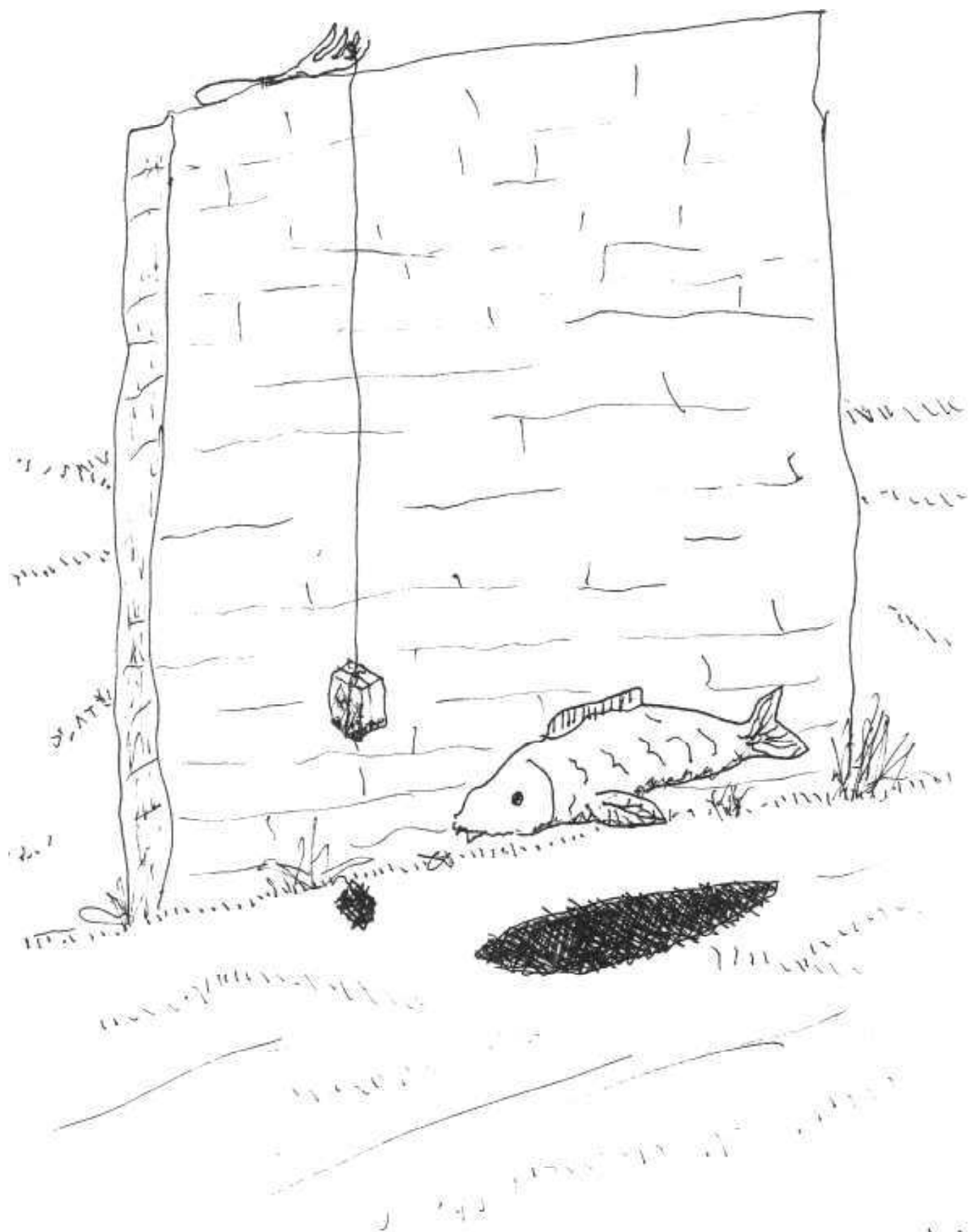
As a part of this organised project, Love and Rage Canberra reject the hierarchic and militarised models of revolutionary organisation, seeing in them only a pale reflection of the social organisation that holds us in place. We believe that every aspect of life must be revolutionised, especially - though not limited to - our conduct *as* revolutionaries. "People who talk about revolution and class struggle without referring explicitly to everyday life, without understanding what is subversive about love and what is positive in the refusal of constraints, such people have a corpse in their mouth."

*This Is Not A Commodity* is a contribution to this project.

**the editors**

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Xtian 9/16/2001



# Minimum Definition of Revolutionary Organisations

*(This definition was adopted by the 7th conference of the Situationist International)*

**Since the only purpose** of a revolutionary organization is the abolition of all existing classes in a way that does not bring about a new division of society, we consider any organization revolutionary which *consistently and effectively* works toward the international realization of the absolute power of the workers councils, as prefigured in the experience of the proletarian revolutions of this century.

**Such an organization** makes a unitary critique of the world, or is nothing. By unitary critique we mean a comprehensive critique of all geographical areas where various forms of separate socioeconomic powers exist, as well as a comprehensive critique of all aspects of life.

Such an organization sees the beginning and end of its program in the complete decolonization of everyday life. It thus aims not at the masses' self-management of the *existing* world, but at its uninterrupted transformation. It embodies the radical critique of *political economy*, the supersession of the commodity and of wage labor.

**Such an organization** refuses to reproduce within itself any of the hierarchical conditions of the dominant world. The only limit to participating in its total democracy is that each member must have recognized and appropriated the *coherence of its critique*. This coherence must be both in the critical theory as such and in the relation between this theory and practical activity. The organization radically criticizes every *ideology* as *separate power* of ideas and as *ideas of separate power*. It is thus at the same time the negation of any remnants of religion, and of the prevailing social *spectacle* which, from news media to mass culture, monopolizes communication between people around their one-way reception of images of their alienated activity. The organization dissolves any "revolutionary ideology," unmasking it as a sign of the failure of the revolutionary project, as the private property of new specialists of power, as one more fraudulent *representation* setting itself above real proletarianized life.

**Since the ultimate criterion** of the modern revolutionary organization is its totalness, such an organization is ultimately a critique of politics. It must explicitly aim to dissolve itself as a separate organization at its moment of victory.

**Internationale Situationniste #11 October 1967**

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# The Technology of Isolation

# For any Proposed New Revolutionary Organisation

## 1. Introduction

A new revolutionary organisation is desperately needed. Any effective revolutionary organisation must combat the intrinsic mystification of consciousness about the current human condition, and so must take up the deep feelings which characterise the site of the subject under capital. These precious moments can not be dismissed, as in positivism, and we can not hesitate or equivocate when dealing with the imminent manifestations of the human soul. Instead, psychic life must be ploughed back into the unfeelingness of broader sociality. Thus it may be possible to raise a solution so important in matters of feeling that it is not simply a recognition of spiritual predicament, though this motion of spirituality is *ex hypothesis* undeniable, but discerns changed circumstance and new information about situatedness and the restrictions conspired by circumstance. Such a solution is revolutionary. Cadres versed in theory are essential - even if this means more reading groups, graffiti slogans, alternative reading lists and mostly more reading and thinking time, diverting time and effort from endless poster and leaflet runs.

## 2. An Immediate Theoretical Strategy

To distance ourselves from the economic reductionist left, the hierarchical organisation of which precludes real concentration on the creative thinking individual or set thereof, we must enact an immediate strategy outside their arena of activity. I suggest the best course of action is continual interventions in seminars and meetings where ideas are circulated, particularly in universities. The aim is to building cells of radical thinking activists capable, as a team, of taking on all areas of bourgeois ideology. Forums for aggressive intervention could include graduate and departmental seminars, guest speakers, even undergraduate lectures of an exceptionally reactionary nature.

We should, in these and other contexts I will shortly mention, take radical positions attacking all foundations of bourgeois thought. All such thought, including non-dialectical

interpretations of physical theory, are solid enforcements of alienation and a barrier to the social consciousness necessary for revolutionary activity. We will in the process make mistakes, but must carry out a flouting of all ideas held by an oppressive and stringent intellectual establishment.

Dependent on circumstances and the unfolding of our own theories, we could strenuously deny or call into question the reification of all bourgeois thought focusing on, for instance, full dialectical critiques of Western philosophy such as those made by Hegel, Lukács and beyond; deny the value of arguing free will, freedom/determinism; question dogmatic moralistic belief in "laws of nature"; demand justification for the reactionary notion of causation which rules out the study of the social as a whole; laugh at moral principles; attack the formalism in Dawkins gene style argumentation; debunk all forms of empiricism and positivism as shamefaced idealism; denounce as violently as permitted all structuralist and post-structuralist logics in favour of dialectical thinking permitting contradiction and development; and we must unceasingly oppose all forms of cultural and artistic fetishisation and formalism in art. We must also have the courage to be openly sex affirmative, unafraid to accuse those academics who displace sex purely onto eugenic concerns of neurotically denying the pleasure of sexual intercourse.

We should in public speaking forums congratulate theorists of race, sexual preference and feminism where they recognise bigotry and misogyny, but in no way be coy about attacking these identity theorists where they fail to go the whole way to revolutionary conclusions. We should simply and straightforwardly present the arguments of *The Communist Manifesto* to any VC in their latest buy-off tactic of Q and A sessions: blatantly suggesting that the profit imperative drives them through competition to axe any concerns not immediately maximally profitable. The conclusion is: the direction of tertiary education is incompatible with our desires, needs and goals; we must delineate an impasse resolvable only through action. In public forums where careerists and opportunists present their cases,

call them such, declaring they are towing the line only for their careers whether as reformist unionists/politicians, future government or corporate ladder climbers or as quisling theoreticians - all these plans must be publicly tied to the inevitable CV stuffing and "conflict management".

Importantly, the existence of revolutionary theoretical teams means no-one has to take everything on or know it all. We do not have to sup from Engels' "paupers broth of eclecticism". Rather, by attending seminars and other effective formats in recognisable groups, we cover each others backs. We should not be afraid to be disruptive or defy security officers. Art openings by VCs, deans, politicians etc should be another target as could reactionary art events such as Les Murray reading poetry.

Theoretical and cultural intervention should assume an equal if not greater priority than the organising of rallies etc. if it is clear the rally can not act to force the situation. Campus for instance is a series of high-powered lockouts of important areas. We must take on their public facade; be it sociobiology, revamped Aristotelian philosophy or empty talk of educational excellence before gaining the commitment and numbers we need to break their lines. This will happen sooner than many think. I in no way want to down play, for instance, the need to confront the police such as was crucial at S-11. We need much more of that, but also to prioritise our personal and collective forces so we can fight the *kulturekampf*.

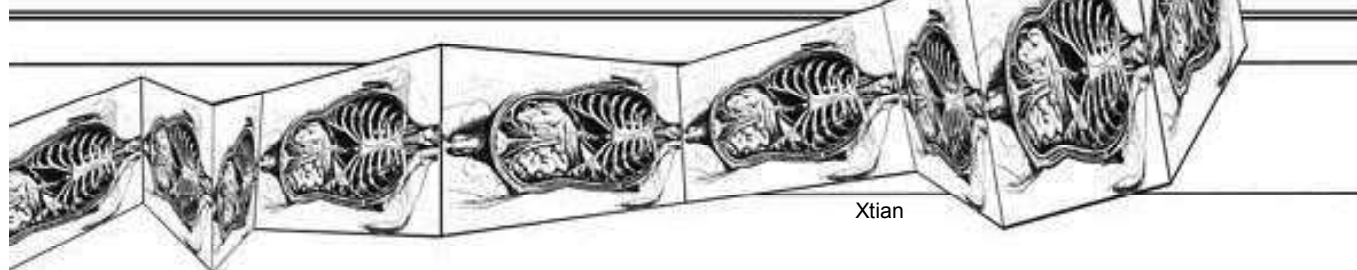
To respond to the inevitable accusations of idealism, let me note that there is nothing unmaterialist about accepting the flow of ideas as a real force, particularly in a university or cultural setting. The encroaching neo-liberalist ideological clampdown evident in tertiary education shows that our opponents, as represented by the Australian Vice Chancellors Committee, have made extensive and effective use of this fact. A dialectical materialism, the only truly revolutionary methodology, recognises the electrical power of reveries,

hopes, imaginings and abstractions; it simply does not cease to recognise the conditions of production under which consciousness as a sensuous practical activity informs the world.

The possibility of new conceptualisations of human being is the only attraction of a ghettoised disenfranchised revolutionary left; I believe careful analysis of, for instance, out-breaks on campus shows that this broadening of the mental horizon, made so narrow in everyday life, precedes any kind of radical activity. As a tenuous recognition of this, an investigation of mental energy has already been enacted in a *faux* way by Leninist parties, but only as a mendacious recruitment strategy.

Thus Socialist Alternative split from the ISO on the basis of intervention in higher education. But A) made it clear this was because the organisation of lecture timetables and the lack of direct workplace supervision made dissent possible and not because of the enlivening possibility of ideas, B) held out the carrot of reading groups which never eventuated or else were primitive exercises in didacticism, and C) in favour of the determinations of an "economic period" and in spite of their intellectual gloss openly scorned the use of revolutionary publications as vehicles for ideas. Similarly we find the DSP setting up a writers group. My peripheral involvement with this soon revealed the creative activity stood in constant censure from the party hacks who at best regarded it as trifling and at worst were openly uncomfortable about, for example and though the issue is of desperate urgency, frank explorations of sexuality. Despite the allotment of an initial freedom the DSP's initiative was therefore in bad faith and any disinterested\* research

into the materially marvellous relations of the psyche in communality



shown to be impossible within the party framework.

### 3. Art

Marx held it was possible for art to advance ahead of general civilisation and therefore of its material base - this is an extension of the observation that it is possible for some types of art to advance ahead of the artistic pack. Even the most diehard formalist would admit to that. There are no better conditions than those of the current omnipresent and absolute intellectual stagnation for art to be overdeveloped. For in a asinine facile society any kind of mental impetus is an antithesis to the general run of degradation. It takes on a sheen - certainly it could be fetishized and will be, but so what? The arena of ideas is thrown open, lions devour whatever comes within reach of their paws. Art is a torch in the night of ignorance, one capable of a dialectical ignition of purposeful struggle. Since the overall situation is so dire the elements of sustained serious rebellion will not only manifest as eccentric spurts of the imagination, these elements will seize on the activity of the imagination as well.

As uncomfortable as it makes party revolutionaries feel and as distant as it is from current mainstream revolutionary direction, we must be prepared to acknowledge the role of art in previous outbreaks of rebellion. Was not the shadow of the 1994 ANU student occupation cast in the light of a ridiculously heightened struggle for spiritual and creative freedom on campus *as well as* the introduction of up front fees for law grads? Likewise, *in conjunction with* critical violent oppressions Watts took place under the Watts towers, Breton was a spark in Haitian revolution throwing off hated colonialists, Paris of 1968 under the league of the Situationist International. The anti-WEF movement catalysed people around globalisation as an attack on wages and the environment, but it itself was catalysed by Seattle, a city with a prominent recent history of cultural unrest expressed through its zines and bands.

When I suggested to a leading member of the ISO that revolutionaries have been on the

cutting edge of art and theory for over a century she predictably denied it. Yet aside from the obvious attraction this tradition gives revolution it is the best way of exposing the utter intellectual vacuity of the far right. Far more active cultural involvement is more than necessary for the growth of revolutionary politics. As conditions ripen for fascism with its bogus sexual displays and sham cultural identity, it could be the prerequisite for the survival of any revolutionary opposition.

Poetry readings, yelled interventions against bands who do it for a job ("down with the commodity spectacle" to "haven't you heard the music industry is going to collapse - get another career!"), revolutionaries emphasising experimental creativity and liaising with radical artists, all are sites for attempts to push art into its realisation by its own suppression as a bourgeois, commodified and specialised form. Most vital is the setting up of art groups promoting hard revolutionary politics and looking to the Hegelian avant-guard as an alternative to hegemonic post-structuralism. I have found art groups far more effective radicalisers than Leninist parties, especially over a long term - most Leninists, out of touch with a deeper and immediate revolutionary invigoration of daily life, burn out and lapse into comparative conservatism. Interventions in art are only part of the story, however, because in the absence of a genuine praxis, art often lags behind theory. We need clear theoretical targets, that is the strategies presented in the previous section.

Nevertheless, we must not ignore the correlations between creativity and revolution; these are the simple awakening of the imagination with the outbreak of an active longing for a better world. And something else - when is being a revolutionary going to start being FUN?

### 4. Longer Term Goals

Revolutionaries assume that they should simply live in families/group houses. In the longer term this is inadequate for a serious contestation of bourgeois life for if we have an analysis and critique of the system as a whole we must put this into practise with a fully lived

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\* Why disinterested? Because the interests of that which conducts the research are the same as the interests of what is researched. Hence there is no outside interest: cash, power politics etc. Current interests even of a more subtle variety, ideologies, inhibitions, morals etc can also be set aside with the right techniques and circumstance.



contestation of all the ideas, norms and values dictated by capitalism. We should be planning and working towards sex affirmative urban communes, revolutionary hang-outs such as the one the Surrealists set up in Paris in their hey day, and possibly concentrations of our forces in a given neighbourhood with a view to extending the perimeters of this from say a couple of houses in a street to a whole block etc.

There is no reason why this lifestyle has to displace other forms of activism. In fact, communal living and organisation would make us more effective in anything from strikes to rallies to occupations to combating Nazi politics. Communal life, so vitally important in the Russian Revolution before it was buried under the dead weight of an authoritarian party, continues to hold out the potential to supplement and catalyse activism, especially activism including a healthy creative intellectual life. Thus a group who lived together could, *instead* of just mindless drunkenness in a pub, *also* critically intervene in a local exhibition, organise poetry readings which

facilitated frank discussion of enforced limits versus the marvellousness of life etc.

## 5. Conclusion.

I find the fuller cultural and intellectual approach which immediately contests capitalist mundanity to be attractive to many of the disaffected, both in theory and (as I have gone some way to carrying it out) in art groups and as an individual. I can speak only for myself, however, when I declare as strongly as possible: I have no wish to be involved in any kind of number crunching vapid political manoeuvrings within current student umbrella organisations. I regard mindless activism, which other than tokenistically excluding a cultural context, as burnout material and a straight reflection of a banalised social order.

Those advocating revolution yet participating in these reactionary life-denying *modus operandi* "speak with a corpse in their mouth". I have no doubt that the revolution can only be by and for the spirit hungry for freedom in all its splendiferous and enlightened guises. I affirm the need for the immediate redress of the neglect of those areas of everyday life, of feeling and sex, of poetry, mental powers and womanhood, love and hate - all deliberately shunned by a revolutionary left with a scientific penchant for statistics and a pusillanimous avoidance of their own personhood. Any group will fail or succeed on the ability to consider these issues. Marx, whose expression is obviously that of his time, noted:

"To be radical is to go to the root of the matter. For man however, the root is man himself."

Dismissing imaginative and intellectual life you will fall into the hell of the politics of envy, the boredom of student political organs, sectarian obsessions, the sludge of those grovelling in a *resentment* for the powers that be. Should this be the case I will grieve the possibility for a new and decisively revolutionary form of activism which has been made pressing by the interests and needs of the masses, and which due to the sterile, mechanistic and closed minded attitude of the so-called revolutionary left, could not be realised when it was most needed.

**Dave Zero**



are  
you

**BORED?**

Everyone seems to circle around endlessly. "Twirling, twirling," waiting for something to happen. Something amazing. The touch of a blessed ache. Maybe this poster has the answer... could that be true... You've looked for so long with such little luck. You've looked into the glass face of the television and still nothing. Looked into the eyes of your lover and wished they were someone else. Into your own eyes staring back from the bathroom mirror. Nothing. You've tried to fill in this emptiness, this desire to be something more. But you can't quite work out what it is, you just hope you'll find it before you die. Something important you've forgotten. The taste of your first kiss, smothered. The anxiety and despair you feel are the measure of your impotence *and* your potential. Unsettling thoughts that maybe things could be radically different. All the promises you forgot to keep have come back to haunt you. What are you waiting for? New cars, new shoes, new love, new food, new sounds, new people, new fashion, new films, new thoughts, new style, new house, new friends, new toys, new books, new hair, new job, new flag, new music, new you. The monotonous regularity of the promise of the new. A sheet of light cast over your closed eyes. Meanwhile life passes by. Stop waiting. Nothing is coming.



# C N T E D

## 12 June - Crowney, New Hampshire.

Scientists at Quantum Technologies Inc. have succeeded in developing a device capable of excising and annihilating a particular length of time without affecting subsequent or previous sections of time. This striking concept is made clearer by Anna Pereira, a scientist in the path-breaking team: "Time is just another dimension; we can now take slices out of it the way you can take a slice of bread from the middle of a loaf." "It was quite hard" says Dr. Karl Dalhousie, the project coordinator, "eliminating a chunk of time from the universe has an annoying tendency of ruining all subsequent events." Critics and demonstrators had been warning of doom and apocalypse if the device created three minutes of nothing. Several sceptics complained that nothing could come from such a chunk of nothing. However, last Tuesday, Dalhousie's team succeeded in eliminating from the timeline a three-minute stretch, sometime in the seventeenth century, and as he points out, we are still here. - AP

## 18 September - New York

Investors are queuing to the door of Quantum Technologies Inc. since news of the successful trial and possible mass production of the device they are calling the Causality-Neutral Temporality Expungation Device, or CNTED for short. According to insiders, the device will allow, for the first time in history, to physically remove bits of history you don't like from time itself. Dr. Dalhousie, CEO of QTI, refused to issue a public comment. Early suggestions for its use include the elimination of that awfully tedious decade, the 1970s, and perhaps of what has been called the "dreadfully embarrassing" reign of James I. - Reuters

## 21 November - New York

In late breaking news, Quantum Technologies Inc. has revealed that the CNTED has been perfected to such a state that it is now possible to extirpate a slice of the timeline from the past and paste it on the future. "One time travels without actually going back in time" explains Dr. Karl Dalhousie "you just put the past in your way, and sail into it the old fashioned way: by getting older." Asked to explain how he had developed such a substantial improvement in so little time, he described an amazingly original experiment where he mailed himself instructions in the future to send back the blueprints for the machine once he discovered how to build it, compressing decades of research in the

time it takes to write a simple letter. "At first we did not know if time travelling would work, but when inside-out apples started appearing in the lab, Dr. Pereira had the flash of insight that these may have been sent from the future. In a sense, we got the results of the experiment before we executed it, or even conceived of it" says Dalhousie. "Once we knew it was possible, we just put a letter in a box under the kitchen sink and voila, instantly received the results, sent back from fifty years in the future." - *The New York Times*

Extract from *Scientific American*, December article:

"...without any windows and in the back of an overgrown New Hampshire apple orchard, the Temporal Dynamics laboratory of Quantum Technologies Inc. could hardly inspire awe. Yet in this converted barn a small team performed some clever, yet viciously counter-intuitive experiments which will forever change the face of history. The story, however, begins some thirty years ago. Using only kitchen implements and lots of good old fashioned Yankee can-do, a young Karl Dalhousie developed a device for turning apples inside out. This was to mark a life-long fascination with apples and higher-dimensional topology. Many years later on, he would use these signature inverted apples to tell his past self that he was on the right track with experiments that proved the possibility of CNTED devices and time travelling. "I always liked them apples. Apple schnapps, apple pie, boy, there ain't nothing like a fresh picked apple. Hated peeling them but, and the skin always got stuck in my braces"

(...)

So what was the note that, placed under the kitchen sink changed the future and past course of history? Here it is, in its simple glory: "Dear Karl, or whomever is in charge of the Laboratory: please send blueprints ASAP to 16 Orchard Lane, Crowney, New Hampshire, 20th November 1978." "In retrospect, we probably didn't need to say 'ASAP' adds the congenial Karl Dalhousie."

## 22 November - New York

Only hours after revealing significant advances in the functionality of CNTED, QTI has, again by the method of self-posting of letters, developed even more perfect machines. It is now possible to select with confidence and accuracy a particular chunk of space to remove from the timeline, opening the



door for time-travel and perhaps, it has been suggested, a multibillion dollar industry. Previous experiments were marred by unfortunate bouts of implosion and four-dimensional knotting. "It is quite safe now", says Bill Steveson, spokesperson for QTI, "nothing like this will happen again" he said, holding up a four-dimensionally reverted tennis ball. - AP

## 28 November - Washington

Congress has sat down to discuss the Temporality Appropriation Bill, which will for the first time allow for the traffic in time-line slices between companies. It will at last be possible to actually own a piece of four-dimensional, rather than merely three-dimensional, real estate. With neo-Luddites predicting another 'tragedy of the commons' as investors move in to purchase premium temporal real estate, President Fox has already fast-tracked the Temporal Banishment Act, which will allow for the deportation of such troublemakers to the Late Permian period. "Let them eat frogs and giant salamanders" said Ted Nimitz, R-Dellaware. - *The Washington Post*

## New York

The UN will discuss provisions for time-trading next month, some countries have expressed grave concern since all references to the heavily indebted country of Mali dissappeared last week, rumours abound that the entire history of the country was impounded by the IMF. The Fund refused to comment, but added that the Carboniferous swamp that now occupies the area formerly known as Mali could be CNTED-converted into a nice slice of petroleum sediment. Meanwhile, the World Bank predicts that poverty can be "eliminated in no time at all" if idle, third-world countries give some of their surplus time to the rich, busy, time-starved first world countries. "Laziness is their comparative advantage" according to Jim Wolfeshon, referring to sub-Saharan Africa. With large-scale protests warning of massive inequality in access to the very substance of existence itself, Wolfeshon has found himself under considerable pressure. He notes that "what those neo-Luddites don't understand is that we are on their side: we want to help the poor. By eliminating six hours of idle hunger from their miserable days, not only will we greatly increase the GDP of

countries with severe unemployment, we will also increase effective per hour per capita income. From their perspective, they will have meals more often, as their days shrink to about 18 hours on average. Now, why would you want to object to that?"

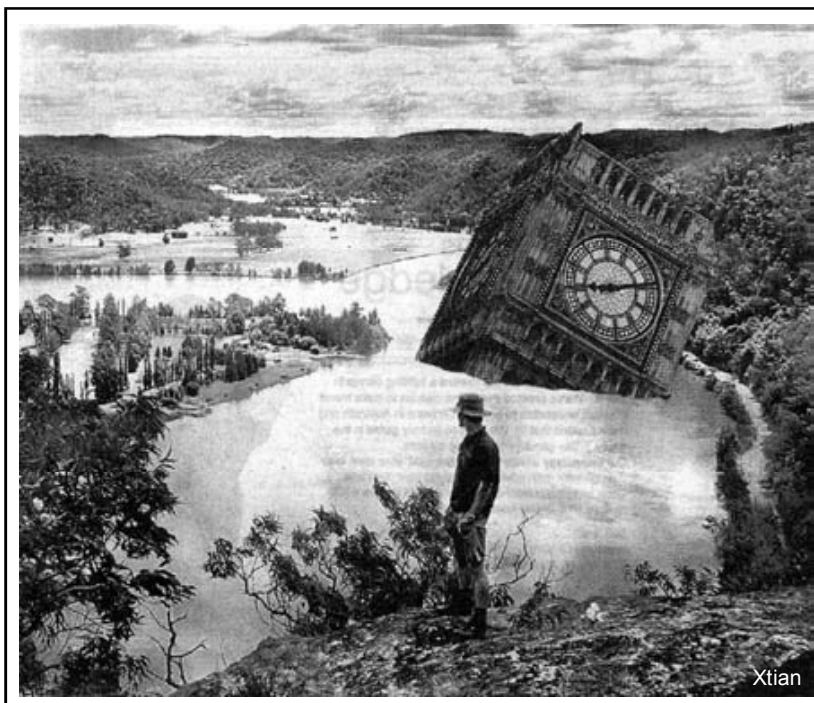
## 2 January

Editorial in *Wired* magazine:

Forget the information superhighway. Forget Napster. Forget Linux. Forget Microsoft. The future, we thought, was going to arrive very quickly. Some were going to be left behind as we charged down the fast lane into hyperlinked commerce... But in the future, we now know, there will be no future. Wow. There will be only capital markets and four-dimensional real estate transactions, and endless, detemporalised wealth. Stark hell or ultra-capitalist utopia? "Don't listen to the neo-Luddites" is the call

from the hip new generation of meta-temporal ideas men.

"It will not be easy to adjust to the new world of ultra-temporality and hyperdimensional commerce" says Bill Steveson, QTI spokesman, "some people are not going to cope very well; the days of big history are over, you just don't have those old meta-narratives to hold things together. The trans-temporal



businessman has to overcome these old-economy attachment to causality and the regularity of the cosmos. Will it be a disaster? Well: if it were to be, it would already have been." Warren Hastings, from the Temporal Company suggests that time has been "the ultimate nanny-state, taking care of people from cradle to grave, simply handing out causal connections for people. In the future, we see a great market in selling people causal connections with which to organise their meta-lives. This is great step for freedom."

Some go even further. Milton Friedman, recently rejuvenated and reconstituted as a cybernetic mollusc after a trip to the 45th century AD is far more radical: "Well, Bill Steveson is a nice guy, but what he doesn't realise is that terms like 'old economy' only mean something if you think that the 'new' economy applies only to the future, after the invention of the CNTED. But the CNTED

Civilization immediately envelops the whole history of the universe. There isn't really an 'after' the CNTED. All time-slices are in the market, they are all freely available to those with the requisite capital. In fact, I hear that stocks in specialist late-80s temporal tourism agencies are quite high; people like going back to the 'old-economy' for a laugh."

Indeed, Friedman argues that the CNTED is the ultimate technology, with which we can at last dispense with some contradictions imposed on economic theory by the tyranny of time. "Yes, dynamic analysis was always the weakest part of economic theory. We now know that it was a mistake all along. It is much better to make time itself play the rules of the market than the other way around." David Ricardo, regarded by many as the father of the static method of political economy concurs: "By all means, sir, if the righteous shall have the means to trade honourably in slices of Time, the adjustment of demand to supply will necessarily produce a perfect outcome" he said, in a specially arranged CNTED trans-temporal communication from the 19th century. In sum, the future vista opens before us like a brave dawn: a new universe with a new metaphysics, where time, Chronus, the ultimate tyrant, has at last been bent to serve the will of the people - as manifest in their free choices in the grand market of four-dimensional real estate. Democracy has at last won. And if you don't like it, try the Permian period with Castro, Mali and the rest of the amphibian-munching Luddites.

### **15 January - Havana**

We are standing in what used to be the island of Cuba. Now, it is something experts are calling an "Permian Marsh." We are the first people to step into this slice of 340 million BC, miraculously brought to the present day by use of the cut-and-paste function of a very powerful CNTED. Why did this happen? Let's just say that this is the new American conception of an embargo. After Keynes and Marx were wiped out from history by a consortium of insurance firms in association with QTI...

### **Pepsi of February - Atlanta**

Many are predicting chaos following the deregulation of the four-dimensional real-estate market. Outraged by its competitor's purchase of all the dates formerly known as 12 February for the next nine thousand years, Coca Cola has moved in to purchase November, which will henceforth be known "Cola Festival". Entry to this month, as to the Pepsi of January will be restricted to customers of the soft-drink giant. "By using a specially modified CNTED, we will extirpate all Novembers to a location 17 million years in the future, and charge entry. No Cola, no November." says Coca-Cola... Pepsi retorted that "November was not much of a month for soft-drink sales anyway." Coca Cola stocks fell sharply after Phillip Morris imported the years of 1945 and

1947 and pasted them in the place of the next 24 Novembers taken by Coca-Cola. "At least a month a year for the next 24 years" said Jim Fumassa, spokesman for Phillip Morris, "customers will be able to enjoy the rich taste of vintage tobacco, in an atmosphere tolerant of smokers and complete with good old-timey American values."

### **Microsoft of Oktoberfest - Los Angeles**

They call them 'the idle'. You walk past them in your brisk CNTED-accelerated walk and hardly notice their blank faces, their contorted still-frame grimaces. Your 56-hour day hurries past these wraiths without pause while they linger, in a strange way not quite there with you. They are the new temporally poor. These wretches not only cannot afford to buy extra time to get a job, which these days requires at least 20 free hours a day, they are in fact temporal debtors. They have sold their hours for food, and when prices in the human life-hour market collapsed, they resorted to giving away hours in the hope of shortening the pangs of hunger. Now they voluntarily decelerate themselves, the latest 'high' to hit the street, more popular than even the latest drugs. "Before you would get crack-heads and angel-dust freaks around here" says Martin, 34, in a painfully slowed slur, "but now you only get these... these... *Pods*. They are not even people. They just lie there, slowing themselves, speeding the world in the stupid hope things will get better. Things won't get anything."

But that is not the only cruel future that awaits the lower orders in the new era of universal four-dimensional real estate, they are also not causally connected, or at least not in a way intelligible to us. A striking example of this occurred whilst I interviewed a man. He seemed quite normal, and said that: "A good life-story is expensive to buy, these guys resort to building their lives from the merest scraps of time-slices; they don't make sense, not even to themselves in the end, it's just four-D junk they've stuck together" he said, before rematerializing a few feet to the left, with the mistaken impression that the interview had taken place 45 years ago. He looked at us and blankly cried. This is his every day. Martin explained: "they are building their lives the way a hobbo pulls scraps of paper over himself to keep warm: if you read the writing running between all those pieces of paper, it wouldn't make any sense."

...and yet we live our daily lives in blissful ignorance of the real destruction of fellow man, even as our working hours approach a week per day we still go on, glad for the control CNTED has given us over our lives. - *The UK Guardian*

### **Cypher Incomplete**



# SANTA ROSSO



Who is Santa Rosso? Tear away kid brother of Santa Claus or cousin of King Ubu? Much has been written, mostly dismissive, of that little red man. It's not hard to see why. Like the much maligned pirates of yore, Santa Rosso has set his life on 'rectifying' the real thieves of the human spirit; specifically the corporate bondage of the 'Coca-Cola-Claus'.

From his antarctic hideaway, the Solar Utopia, Santa Rosso and his band of pranksters board their Celestial Cars to launch themselves upon a sleeping world. And here is perhaps the most obvious of the many differences between Rosso and Claus. Rather than the shoddy franchise that sees a multitude of tired proletarians donning the corporate colours to perpetuate the myth of a 'giving' capitalism, the multitude of Santa Rossos' scouring the globe are ALL the real thing! Who was the first and who will be the last? In their gleaming Celestial Cars wrapped in a fog of many coloured butterflies, replete with crystalline bubble canopy and richly inlaid faux Victorian interiors, the Santa Rossos' disport themselves throughout time and space.

Protected by the temporary domination of capital, Santa Claus' notorious deal, that reduced gift giving not only to an annual aberration but a much needed yearly pole for consumption to swing around, is met at every turn by Santa Rosso. Helping to nurture the sometimes obscured and partially harnessed revolt of desire, Santa Rosso is Claus's living negation, charting the blood red river of revolt, engaging in disinterested play under the only flag recognised: the way of Potlatch and the Solar Utopia.

Among the Rossos' many friends, of particular note is a creature known as 'Gamera'. But that is another story...

**Saint Johnny Soluble**

# S11: Make Crown a prison, the criminals are already inside

## Introduction

S11 (September 11) was the name given to the first day of the World Economic Forum's<sup>1</sup> (WEF) Asia-Pacific Economic Summit held at Melbourne Crown Casino (Australia) this year (2000). Thousands of environmentalists (from the Greens Party, Non-Government Organisations, hippies), socialists (anarchists, Leninists, autonomists), indigenous Australians, concerned citizens, trade unionists, lesbians/gays, and other remnants of the left encircled the Casino complex to prevent the WEF from continuing its program of removing economics (and hence social relationships) from public control. This is a story of one of the people of S11.

## Monday, S11

### Setting the Scene

And so I couldn't get much sleep. The howling wind berated against the window, awakening me every hour or so. Either that or it was the anticipation. 4:30am: Andrew, who hadn't yet retired for the morning, gave me my wake-up call. By 5am I was on my way. 6am: I met my sister at the bottom of the stairs outside Spencer St Station and we made our passage, past few, but fellow adventurers to our rendezvous point on the corner of Clarendon St and City Road, just across from McDonald's. The scene was apocalyptic: Still dark, the wind screamed; a police helicopter hung in the air with its searchlights and a sound that made you feel you were in a war zone. Crown Casino, a fortress to capitalist accumulation,

loomed, its towers reminiscent of a feudal castle, reminding us all of the class society that has dominated our world for thousands of years. Slowly our group assembled. We numbered around 50, all of whom had met on Sunday to plan our action.

Red and Black: An unlikely looking bunch of revolutionaries, with little of the obvious signs. We assembled into our affinity groups. Four of us formed the *Institute for Disinterested Surrealist Research* (IDSR), only to have it disintegrate not much more than an hour later. There wasn't much need for affinity groups, but it was fun dreaming up communication networks and planning what to do if something "big" occurred. (If people only did what was required, life would be ever so dull.) The Red and Black flag<sup>2</sup> came out and the rain threatened as we journeyed off to form the barricades.

### On the Barricades

The skies opened and, being the "concerned for our own comfort" kind of group that we were, we ran to shelter of the main Crown Casino car park. Here we made the first blockade. It was also at the point that we encountered the "S11 Marshals" (a revealing title). It was "their" task to organise the uncoordinated rabble into a fit and fighting blockading machine. This consisted of telling everyone to link arms and form a block so as make it more difficult for the police to divide us. Essential training, if it weren't for the fact that it was blindingly obvious to anyone after observing a blockade for about five



<sup>1</sup> A conglomeration of roughly one thousand corporations. Their conference contained representatives of the ruling class; CEOs, heads of governments.

<sup>2</sup> Red: Communism, Black: Anarchism.



seconds. To further add to my annoyance with the Marshals, they insisted on regaling us with dull anecdotes instead of informing us as to what was occurring on other blockades, which they occasionally did in a most misleading and vague manner. The graffiti, "Marshals - keeping info from us", seems very apt. But that was the last real contact we had with the Marshals or any other central body for the rest of the WEF festival, so it made no real difference.

There were moments, around 7am, when there weren't many people, and I had this sinking feeling that we were the only ones brave (or stupid) enough to venture out. In time, however, people came and joined the assemblage. There were soon enough to block all the entrances in the area, buses full of WEFers were turned away. The Green Block, people from Friends of the Earth, the Greens Party, and various other environmental organisations, formed their "arrestable" block over one of the entrances. IDSR joined them. However, I soon felt a need to investigate the other happenings. IDSR splintered, some remaining with the Green Block, the others moving to Clarendon Street and to the first clash with the police.

### *Horsing Around*

As we approached the Southern blockade on Clarendon Street it was clear something was about to happen. Police had "acquired" some horses and decided to use them to attack a barricade. What they didn't count on, however, were the hundreds of dissenters swarming from the South to surround them. The police and their unwilling equine pawns were trapped between about three hundred protesters on either side. They were forced - in much reluctance - to retreat, but not before they had punched and used their hippo-hostages to hurt a number of people. Nevertheless, there was much merriment as the police, atop their slaves, scurried off. "Get those animals off those horses!" rang out down the streets.

*"The faces of capitalist oppression have no names"* - S11 graffiti

In time we reached Kings Way, a road that passes through the Crown Casino complex. Here we stayed for a couple of hours, watching the people with music and costumes, making their way around the besieged casino. I thought the cyclops' (three people dressed in business suits with monstrous masks of one-eyed fiends) were the most impressive. They said nothing, merely posed in front of the casino and police; that was all they needed to do. It was here that I overheard a conversation between a blockader and one of the S11 Legal Advisers discussing the identification badges which police usually have. All but one or two of the police had removed them. The Legal Adviser stated that "in situations where the public's safety was involved, the police are not required to wear their badges." My mind flooded with images of huge metal badges that might take someone's eye out in a scuffle. It wasn't until later that I found out they were a piece of plastic with a strip of velcro on the back. I'm not sure I'll ever know what the Legal Adviser meant by what she said. Noticing the lack of badges and the behaviour of the police, all my theory on the role of police in a class society began to gel. It seems that the closer you get to the arm of the law, the closer you get to law's complete collapse. There is a space where law doesn't exist any more, and it's at that point that you know it never really existed in the first place. That space is somewhere between the head of the protester and the batons of the riot police. This had its realisation for many on the Tuesday morning and evening, and for me, Wednesday morning.

*"The truth brings down ratings  
... and governments."* - S11 graffiti

The media, those valiant seekers of truth, owned and run by the people who attended the conference, portrayed the event, at least in Melbourne<sup>3</sup>, no differently from Stalinist Russia or Fascist Germany. Someone I spoke to after S11 mentioned that if you had listened to the TV news and not seen the pictures, you'd have thought the protesters were out with fists blazing and projectiles flying through the air. If you had seen the images without the sound, you'd have witnessed the police with their fists and batons, smashing

<sup>3</sup> I've heard of much better reports in other places around Australia, and better still in other parts of the world. Where there is no possibility of people influencing the events, there is no reason to distort them.

No future without revolution! - Welcome to the greed Olympics. - We will haunt you until no-one starves.

people's heads. It was so masterfully compiled and spoken with such absolute conviction that Goebbels could not have done any better.

I know many people who were quite upset by how completely fallacious the media depicted the event, but to think it could operate any differently would be the real deception. But the media does not really control how people think, no matter how hard it tries, and it certainly does not motivate our actions. It's there to promote apathy and isolation, something it does well.

## Tuesday, S12

*Meanwhile... in Paris, May 1968*

The first factory had been occupied the day before, and at this date the most imbecilic member of the most retarded group could not doubt that a very grave social crisis had begun. Nevertheless Vaneigem, much better informed, as soon as he had appended his signature to our circular, left the same afternoon to take his train to rejoin his holiday location on the Mediterranean, booked a long time ago. Several days later, learning abroad, through the mass media, what was proceeding in France (as predicted), he naturally set about returning, crossing with great difficulty the strike-bound country, and rejoining us one week after his ridiculous faux pas. By then the decisive days, when we were able to do the most for the movement, had passed. Now we're well aware that Vaneigem truly likes revolution and that he in no way lacks courage. Thus one can only understand this as a borderline case of the separation between the rigorous routine of an unshakably orderly daily life and the passion, real but heavily disarmed, for revolution.

- Situationist International, "The Communiqué of the S.I. Concerning Vaneigem"

*Back in Melbourne, September 12 2000*

I, on the other hand, spent the day sleeping, playing *Civilisation*, learning some of the intricacies of database programming, and conversing in a leisurely way about this and that. At the Crown Casino, however, the retaliation of the state, under the influence of the WEF delegates, was in full swing. The embarrassment of the Monday<sup>4</sup>, turned into the bashings of the Tuesday. The police, in riot gear, headed out on the morning and evening of the 12<sup>th</sup>, brandishing their batons, ready to do some serious damage, resulting in hundreds of injuries... cuts, broken teeth, concussion, broken arms, spinal damage.

## Wednesday, S13

*All Power to the Police State!*

6:30am. My sister and I met outside Spencer Street Station once again and



went to *human* the blockades. At 7am we were on the first blockade over the Spencer St bridge, with no more than twenty others. My sister, who was closer to the police than I, heard say of such things as "They're going to feel some real pain today." and "Their faces will get smashed into the concrete." All of a sudden, hundreds of police in riot gear came running past us from the main entrance to Crown Casino. There were men and women in blue running past for about five minutes, impressive in a sad sort of way.

<sup>4</sup> At least one third of all the delegates couldn't get into the conference.

At first I didn't notice the line forming further down Clarendon Street, blocking the road. It soon dawned, however, that while we were watching the spectacle, we'd been surrounded by hundreds upon hundreds of fully kitted out police; batons, armour, and helmets.

Meanwhile... There were thousands of people gathered around the stadium. I've heard the Marshals knew of the situation at the other side of the Casino, but decided that indoctrinating the masses was more important than having the numbers to prevent the police from rioting.<sup>5</sup>

The police that were behind our blockade decided to push us out of the area. There were so few of us that we left on our own accord as soon as the police began to move. The police chased us over the Spencer St bridge, pushing and kicking people over, punching anyone who wasn't fast enough. We soon came to where the riot police were lined up on the other side of the bridge. We had to move past them to get out of the area. The riot police, with batons, struck anyone trying to get past (including my sister and myself).

And then it was over, we'd been pushed aside. The *real* people could now get together to plan *their* future for *us*. My sister was crying due to the shock of being thumped by a six foot plus man with a helmet, visor, armour, and baton.

"Thank you copper for punching - you just strengthened my resolve."  
- S11 graffiti

### The Procession

In early afternoon thousands of S11ers donned their costumes and kicked up their feet as they made their way around the inner city of Melbourne for a festival where capital relations dared not show its face. It was a tour, of Nike, McDonald's, and an extended stay outside the worst of the lot of them: the stock exchange. Ohms Not Bombs, with Nuclear Freeways float in tow, was churning out the grooviest music this side of Swanston St, with some of the best political rapping I've heard. A snake, held afloat by about ten people, slithered its way through the streets. There was dancing, shouting of slogans, placards, police protecting their masters, and a joy in central Melbourne that hasn't

been seen for some time. A pretty, young, hippy girl who'd had her arm broken by the police riots the night before, was handing out a pamphlet with a seed on it ("Plant a Seed of Tomorrow"):

#### We are now choosing a world where..

- ..children can name more brand-names than animal species
- ..everything from contact lenses to relationships are disposable
- ..the workforce is over-stressed
- ..lack of purpose is leading to depression, drugs and suicide
- ..commercialism is shortening our attention spans and boring us to death
- ..business decisions are being made further and further away from where consequences are felt
- ..life-forms are patented
- ..most of our goods are made by sweat-shop labour
- ..the 2 largest industries in the world are Military and drugs
- ..success is measured by how fast we use up the Earth's resources
- ..we are losing diversity of culture and wisdom
- ..we believe there is no alternative!

#### We could be choosing a world where..

- ..co-operation is celebrated ahead of competition
- ..creative, meaningful work is abundant for all
- ..we are valued more as citizens rather than consumers
- ..schools inspire children to find their true purpose in life
- ..people are happy with their bodies just the way they are
- ..food is safe, natural and healthy - no flavours or additives required
- ..we re-discover the Sacredness of life
- ..creativity and deep confidence are the source of all pursuits
- ..taxes are redirected towards the 'Green Economy'
- ..the whole world is fed, clothed and housed
- ..we are taught how to listen and communicate
- ..people trust each other

It's a little too wishy-washy and hippy for me, but I think it expresses much of the feelings and the reasoning behind the demonstration.

### Fun in the Sun

The parade was over, my sister had gone home, everyone was tired, the sun was fading. I lay in the middle of

<sup>5</sup> Organise, #1, Sept 2000: 9

Queensbridge, listening to the music, talking to my friends, realising how wonderful cities are without cars: suddenly all is quiet, the roads are safe (and so comfortable to lie on), people are happy. Eventually, the police, thinking they were being neglected, came to warn us that they were opening the road soon; we should move off the road or we might be hit by the flow of traffic.

"Cops with fake smiles make me feel icky!"  
- S11 graffiti

We didn't move.

### Hit and Run

On the blockades, things were still happening. A commotion drew me towards one of them. I arrived at a blockade where only minutes before a woman had been run over by a hit and run attack by an unmarked police car. The car sped off.<sup>6</sup> The whole event demonstrates perfectly the state's contempt for workers.

I travelled around the Spencer St side of the Casino. One of the blockades still retained a number of protestors. At one point the ambulance, presumably carrying the girl who'd been run over<sup>7</sup>, came out through the area. The police made a clearance for it to travel past. What did they think we were going to do? *Attack the ambulance carrying a fellow protestor?* It was then that I realised the police had no idea what *we* were doing, which made me wonder if they had any idea what *they* were doing. I felt ill.

Exhausted, and a little unhappy due to this last incident, I made my way home. Once again I watched the "news" coverage in dismay, but I soon cheered up: words don't hurt as much as batons (and they'd gone away until another day).

### Conclusion

I've had people ask me whether I thought it was worth it. That's not something I can answer. It wasn't worth the hundreds of protestors and four police being injured. It wasn't worth seeing the media's depiction of the affair. But it did give everyone the feeling that we weren't alone. In the end though it was a festival,

a moment of naked class struggle, a temporary autonomous zone; to try to put a value on it is to miss the point entirely. Something like S11 doesn't have a price.

I heard that the Premier of Victoria labelled us fascists. I see he's mastered his Newspeak. I've even heard people go so far as to say that what we were doing was undemocratic. To even enter into such a discussion would be turning the world inside out; but I want to turn it so it's on it's head.

At the very least, for the first time in my life, Orwell's words were validated: "When I see an actual flesh and blood worker in conflict with his natural enemy, the policeman, I do not have to say which side I am on."

### Led Pup



<sup>6</sup> That may seem cowardly, but the protestors would have (justifiably) pounded them for that. Of course the police would have probably just run over anyone who tried.

<sup>7</sup> The police had taken her into the Casino complex.



# Spain '36

It was the first time that I had ever been in a town where the working class was in the saddle. Practically every building of any size had been seized by the workers and was draped with red flags or with the red and black flag of the Anarchists... Every shop café had an inscription saying that it had been collectivized; even the bootblacks had been collectivized and their boxes painted red and black. Waiters and shop-walkers looked you in the face and treated you as an equal. Servile and even ceremonial forms of speech had temporarily disappeared. ...In outward appearance it was a town in which the wealthy classes had practically ceased to exist. ...Above all, there was a belief in the revolution and the future, a feeling of having suddenly emerged into an era of equality and freedom. Human beings were trying to behave as human beings and not as cogs in the capitalist machine.

- George Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia*, 1938

It speaks highly of their organising capacities and intelligence that the Catalan workers were able to take over the railways and resume services with a minimum of delay; that all transport services in Barcelona and its suburbs were reorganised under workers' control and functioned more efficiently than before; that public services under worker's control, such as telephones, gas and light, were functioning normally within 48 hours of the defeat of General Gode's attempted rising; that the bakers' collective of Barcelona saw to it that so long as they had the flour (and Barcelona's needs were an average of 3,000 sacks a day), the population would have bread.

- Vernon Richards, *Lessons of the Spanish Revolution*, 1953

## The Durruti Column



We have always lived in slums and holes in the wall. We will know how to accommodate ourselves for a time. For, you must not forget, that we can also build palaces and cities, here in Spain and in America and everywhere. We, the workers. We can build others to take their place. And better ones. We are not in the least bit afraid of ruins. We are going to inherit the earth. There is not the slightest doubt about that. The bourgeoisie might blast and ruin its own world before it leaves the stage of history. We carry a new world, here, in our hearts. That world is growing this minute.

- Buenaventura Durruti, 1936

Here in Fraga [a small anarchist town in Spain], you can throw banknotes into the street and no one will notice. Rockefeller, if you were to come to Fraga with your entire bank account, you would not be able to buy a cup of coffee. Money, your God and your servant, has been abolished here, and the people are happy.

- Anonymous, 1936

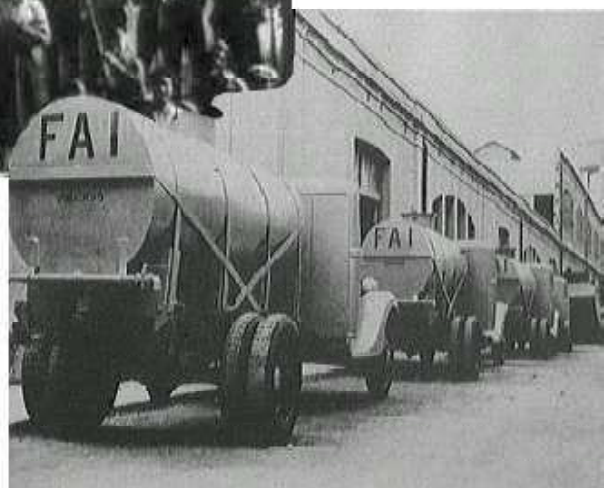
They conquered Aragon as an army of social liberation. Village anti-fascist committees were set up, to which were turned over all the large estates, crops, supplies, cattle, tools, etc., belonging to big landowners and reactionaries. Thereupon the village committee organised production on the new basis, usually collectives, and created a village militia to carry out socialisation and fight reaction. Captured reactionaries were placed before the general assembly of the village trial. All property titles, mortgages, debt documents in the official records, were consigned to the bonfire. Having thus transformed the world of the village, the Catalan columns could go forward, secure in the knowledge that every village so dealt with was a fortress of the revolution!

- Felix Morrow

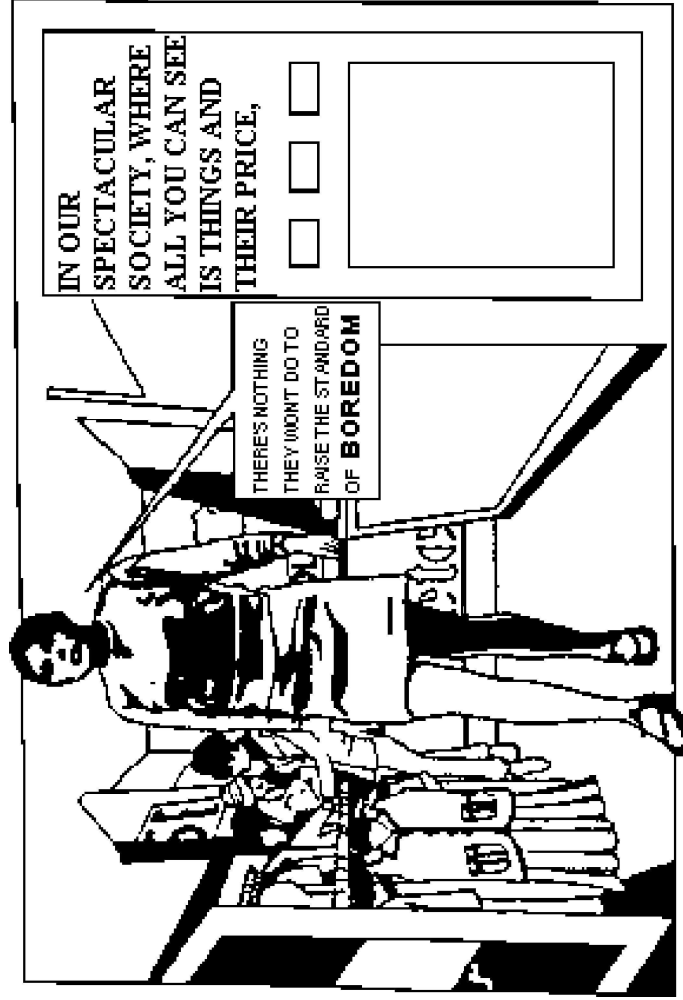
## LONG LIVE THE REVOLUTIONARY OFFENSIVE

No compromise. Disarmament of the National Republican Guard and the reactionary Assault Guards. This is the decisive moment. Next time it will be too late. General strike in all the industries excepting those connected with the prosecution of the war, until the resignation of the reactionary government. Only proletarian power can assure military victory. Complete arming of the working class. Long live the unity of action of CNT-FAI-POUM. Long live the revolutionary front of the proletariat. Committees of the revolutionary defence in the shops, factories, districts.

- Pamphlet of an anonymous Trotskyist group, 1937

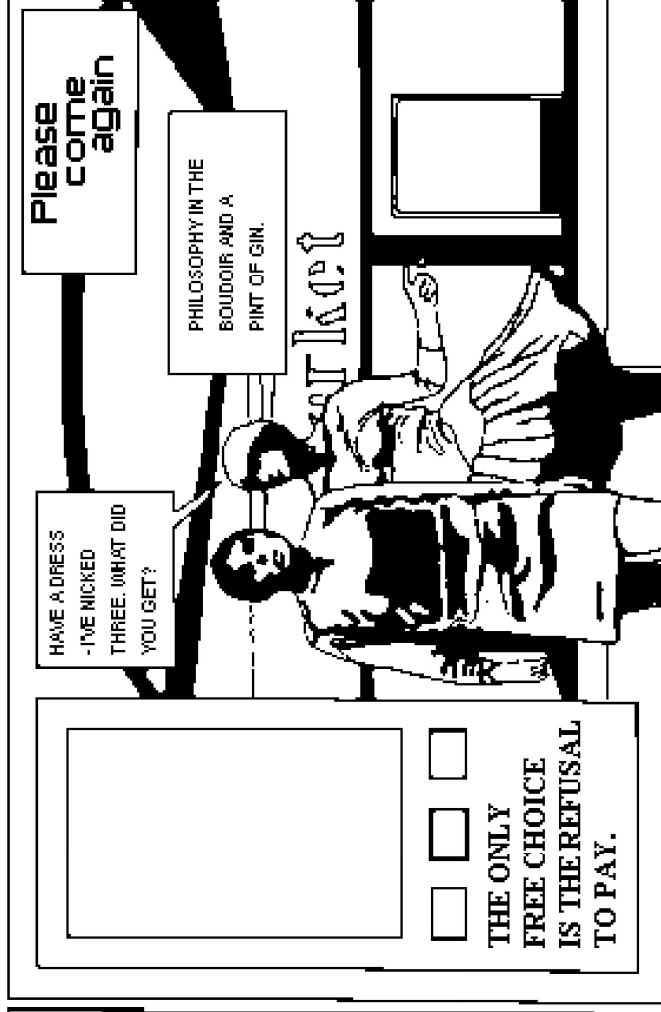
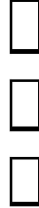


**Federación Anarquista Ibérica (FAI) trucks**



IN OUR  
SPECTACULAR  
SOCIETY, WHERE  
ALL YOU CAN SEE  
IS THINGS AND  
THEIR PRICE,

THERE'S NOTHING  
THEY WON'T DO TO  
RAISE THE STANDARD  
OF BOREDOM



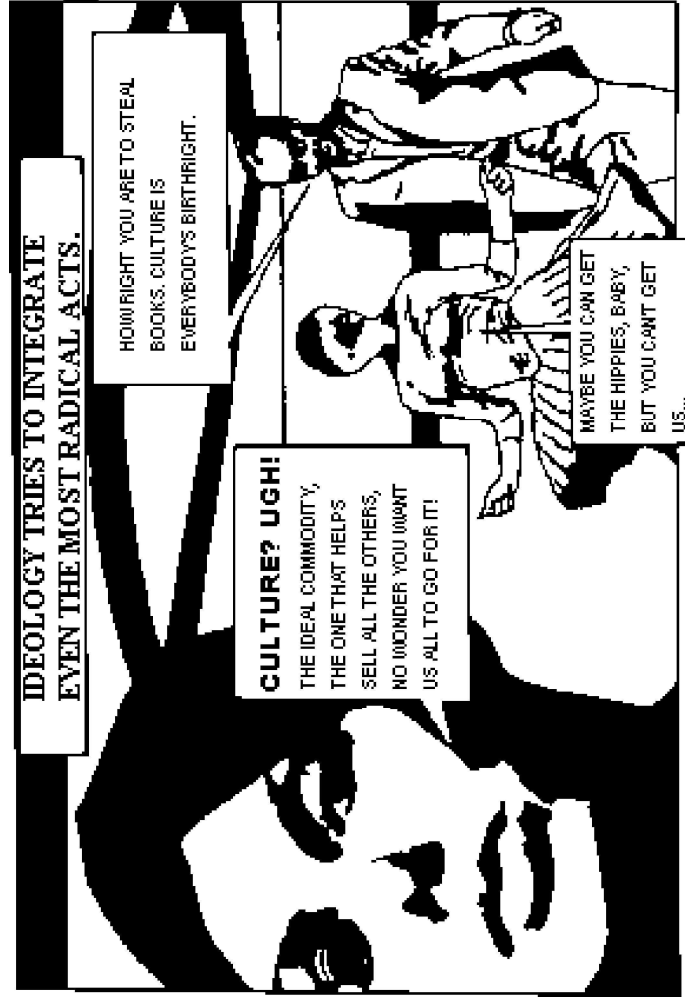
HAVE A DRESS  
-I'VE NICKED  
THREE. WHAT DID  
YOU GET?

PHILOSOPHY IN THE  
BOUDOIR AND A  
PINT OF GIN.

ent ket



THE ONLY  
FREE CHOICE  
IS THE REFUSAL  
TO PAY.

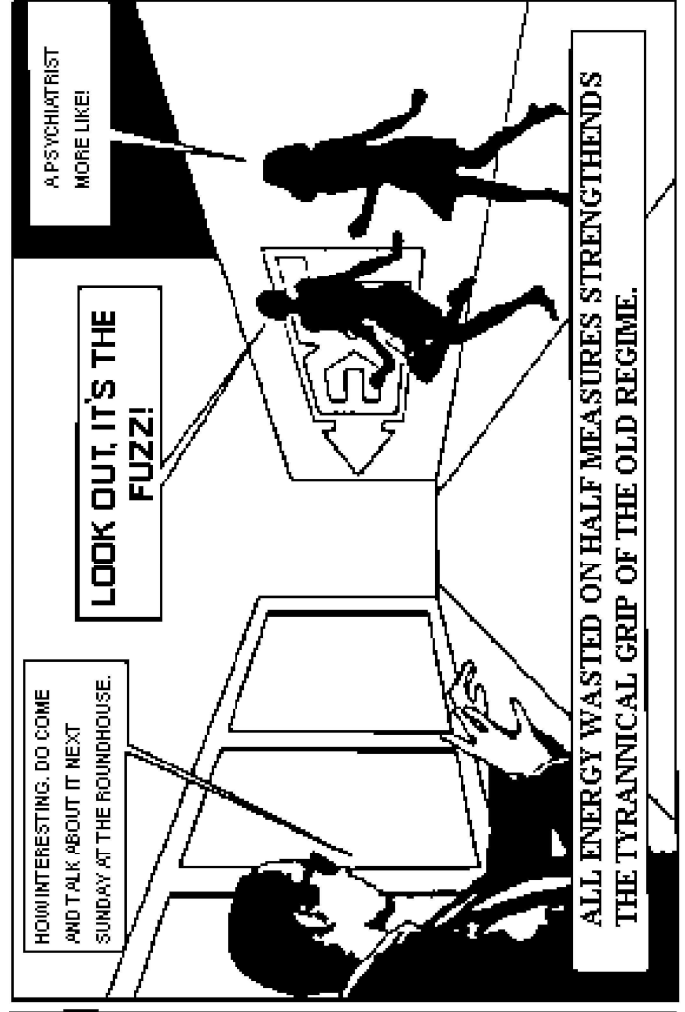


IDEOLOGY TRIES TO INTEGRATE  
EVEN THE MOST RADICAL ACTS.

HOW RIGHT YOU ARE TO STEAL  
BOOKS. CULTURE IS  
EVERYBODY'S BIRTHRIGHT.

CULTURE? UGH!  
THE IDEAL COMMODITY,  
THE ONE THAT HELPS  
SELL ALL THE OTHERS,  
NO WONDER YOU WANT  
US ALL TO GO FOR IT!

MAYBE YOU CAN GET  
THE HIPPIES, BABY,  
BUT YOU CAN'T GET  
US...

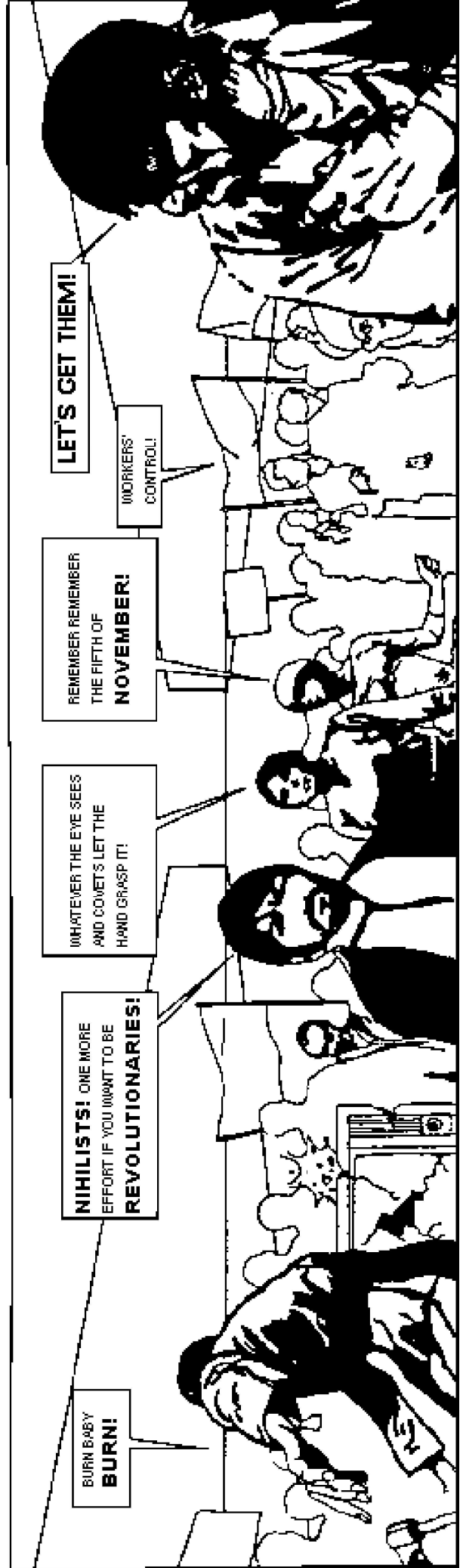


HOW INTERESTING. DO COME  
AND TALK ABOUT IT NEXT  
SUNDAY AT THE ROUNDHOUSE.

LOOK OUT, IT'S THE  
FUZZ!

A PSYCHIATRIST  
MORE LIKE!

ALL ENERGY WASTED ON HALF MEASURES STRENGTHENDS  
THE TYRANNICAL GRIP OF THE OLD REGIME.



# I HAD A DREAM, WHICH WAS NOT ALL A DREAM

“As a result of these reciprocal relationships with Things, which he would habitually control through his thought processes (but we all of us can, and it is by no means certain that there is a difference, even in time, between thought, volition and act, cf. the Holy Trinity), he no longer made any distinction at all between his thoughts and actions nor between his dreaming and waking; and perfecting Leibniz’ definition, that perception is a hallucination which is true, he saw no reason not to say: hallucination is a perception which is false, or more exactly: *faint*, or better still: *foreseen (remembered)* sometimes, which is the same thing). And he believed that above all there are only hallucinations, or perceptions, and that there are neither nights nor days (despite the book’s title, which is why it has been chosen), and that life is continuous; yet that one would never be aware of its continuity, nor even that life exists, without these pendulum movements; and life is primarily verified by the beating of the heart. It is very important that there are heartbeats; but that the diastole is a rest for the systole, and that these little deaths support life, is merely a routine statement not an explanation, and Sengle did not give a damn for it and its formulator, some pedant or other.”

- Alfred Jarry *Days & Nights*

Of all the oppositions that plague us none seem to be as troubling as the split between mind and body, that is idealism and materialism. We live in a world, a *social* world bound by particular relations, where the noun, the *thing*, the frozen moment of a *process*, rules over the verb, action, *becoming*. To this opposition between ‘thing’ and ‘becoming’, can be added a list of other, related, determinates, but particularly the one that still seems to be drawn out, sometimes openly, mostly disguised, is the opposition between ideas and material reality.

Where mind was once the province of the divine it has now been secularised though still aloof. A product of our animal nature. And so our body and the rest of ‘material’ reality has become an entropic god, merely an imperfect replacement for celestial other worldliness. Is one - the mind - superior to the other - the body or matter - or is there a meaningful resolution to their opposition?

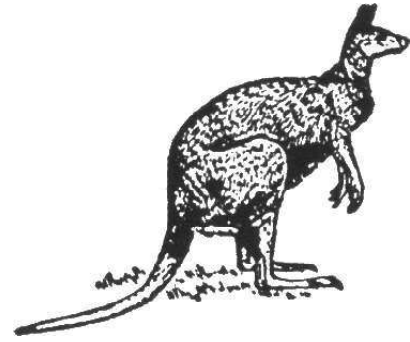
“Human activity - the Praxis - introduces oppositions into the world, which it is able to do only by accentuating those already present there in embryo. It thus accentuates the character of those moments, aspects or properties of the real which have something distinct about them. It introduces into reality the oppositions of concrete and abstract, of necessity and chance, of causal determinism and finality. But at the same time it introduces, and produces dialectically, their unity” (Henri Lefebvre).

The mistake of much post-structuralist argumentation in regards to categories and opposition is to reject notions of a totalising critique and opt for a multiplicity of centres. But this doesn’t resolve the problem of the opposition of categories as they are recreated under different terms. What is important about categories and opposition (thing/becoming, day/night, man/woman) is that they are both anchored in a material actuality *and* are the product of human activity. All of reality, both human and non-human, are meaningful to us as *social* beings and that is how we encounter the world and each other. Categories and opposites as moments of human activity - of our engagement with our becoming, our physico-social becoming - are a part of the process that produces ourselves and our world. And they are also produced by this activity; categories *change*.

People are born grow old and die. Flowers bloom and wither. There are moments of determination in these processes and yet flowers and animals are more than just ‘things’; their own ‘thingness’ is ultimately negated in their death. The tension of our ultimate fate is worked out throughout our life. “The hour of our birth is the hour of our death” (Hegel). There is a constant tension in this identity as a ‘thing’ in life. We are the same person when we wake each day, as also we are not the same person that went to sleep. We are not the same from moment

to moment and yet there is meaningful identity from moment to moment. This process is also conscious in our *desire* to be other than what we are.

The problem is to not make a 'thing' of a 'thing'. The whole world is *becoming* some thing else. In this age of quantum mechanics, where truly "all that is solid melts into air", where what we see, hear, taste, touch and feel - not only being conditioned by social relations - are in themselves a *partial* window into the totality of what *is*. Rather than reflective windows, as such, our sensory aparati are a *part* of the totality that they help us observe & engage with our world, rather than being just mediative 'things'. So the very 'thingness' of material reality becomes unstuck. That is not to say there is no *discontinuity* (or *identity*), only that discontinuity is conditioned by continuity and vice versa.



Discontinuity is a part of continuity. The problem is not the ongoing conscious abstraction of actuality - as this is how we both apprehend and change our existence - but the substitution of sensual perception and representations made through an *empiricism of the senses*, for actuality (totality). The map - of knowledge - is not the territory, but its development, its actual becoming, is a moment of the critique and contestation of the present social order, and, for us social humans, a part of the territory. The map is the map *and* the territory for without it there would be not territory to map.

"To see a World in a Grain of Sand  
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower  
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand  
And Eternity in a hour" (William Blake)

In the 'Preface to the Contribution to a Critique of Political Economy' Marx developed his base/superstructure metaphor as a part of the *summary* of the development of his critique of capitalist social relations. As a way of disengaging from the reality of social relations, generations of Marxists have elevated this paragraph to the status of holy writ. And it is in this text that we can trace the recreation of the idealism/materialism split within contemporary Marxism, a Marxism that claims lineage with Marx, a Marx who stated that his system was "idealism and materialism in a higher synthesis" rather than a superior form of materialism.

What is most obviously forgotten when reading the paragraph in the 'Preface' is that Marx is pointing out the danger of idealism in the face of real relations of production, actual social relations that are a contradictory social totality. For Marx unlike his epigones, the usefulness of the base/superstructure metaphor is in drawing out the moments of a social totality. What has been done by the structural formulators of a base/superstructure reality has been their reification of Marx's categories. "It is not the consciousness of men that determine their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness" is not a plea for the material conditions (material as in *contra* ideal) as the basis of consciousness, but social existence as this 'basis'. This is a crucial difference as social existence is "idealism and materialism in a higher synthesis" where the separation between thinking and doing, change and rest, day and night are resolved, where the only meaning a discrete 'thing' would have is in its ability to not be itself, *and* itself from moment to moment. It is this social existence that includes consciousness as a determining moment, privileged, by Marx, as the realm in which "men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out." What is amazing about the Marxists is that they have seized upon the base/superstructure metaphor and recreated, within the heart of Marx's dialectic, the division of ideas - superstructure - and matter - the economic base.

A picture arises from the crude materialism of the Marxists: material relations are the determinate of consciousness *as if* consciousness is not a part of this process. At the very least these Marxists would claim a *role* for consciousness but a role that is down graded before this reified 'thing' they incorrectly term material relations. One sees their world as one of mindless material 'things' bumping around and knocking into each other with consciousness coming along to try and sort the mess out, but there are no meaningful social relations for us if they are not conscious relations.

Are ideas a part of material reality? If the obvious answer is 'yes' then the problem becomes a question of what is material reality. This is so as it seems there is an obvious separation between sensuous and non-sensuous reality, and that ideas, our consciousness, is somehow separate or epiphenomenal; that is a product of material reality rather than continuous with it.

This is a notion to be rejected.

Consciousness is material reality. And for humans, at least, material reality is consciousness, it is how we engage with ourselves, each other and all that is - whether living or not. False ideas are a part of material reality. If I was to say the moon is made of bat turds, you could point out this is false, or perhaps approach it as a *poetic* reality. Perhaps more illustrative of false ideas is money, seemingly a thing with an independent existence and value in itself, yet in actuality it is a symbolic relation that dissimulates actual human relations.

The illusion of social existence is also its actuality. Our existence, at least as a perceived constant without end, is an illusion and yet we exist. Capitalism thrives upon illusion that is materialised. Money, capital, state, to name the most obvious 'things' that hide actual human social relations. To return social life to the control of society is the return of the illusory. A *does not* equal A and it *does* equal A. "To call on them to give up their illusions is *to call on them to give up a condition that requires illusions.*"

Human activity itself is the overcoming of the split between ideas and matter, between *mental* and *manual*. Our meaningful engagement with actuality can only be played out within the social objectivity that is human society i.e.. Marx's "human activity itself as objective activity". To posit a reality separate to human discourse is about as meaningful as talking about it with 'words' that are - in the minds of the Marxists - asymptotic reflections on the nature of reality rather than a moment, a determining moment, of a becoming objectivity.

The ideal/matter split is replicated in the knowing/being (epistemology/ontology) split used by some Marxists. In their view words - knowledge - though ultimately a part of reality, are always a form of abstract mediation, that is they approximate reality or truth, doomed to never to be that reality - the asymptotic reflection mentioned earlier. It is here that these crude materialists miss the humanisation of nature, human knowledge as both a part of actuality - as a becoming of our humanisation of nature - and constitutive of our social being.

This is a simplified retelling of Hegel's idea of the unhappy consciousness. How does one substitute its subjectivity for the objectivity necessary to realise itself? Subjectivity as thing-in-itself can only be realised through the other, as a desiring being, and as a ceaseless becoming subjectivity can only give way to objectivity and vice versa; that is *becoming*. There can be no noumenal subjectivity.

One idea that tries to bridge the gap between the perceived separate, conscious reality, and *real* reality (i.e. everything outside of the mind) is the notion of a pure unmediated communication contra language. Though this notion tries to solve the problem of what is unsaid in our society - the feelings of emptiness in the encounter of people as 'things' - it ultimately denies the possibility of creative and transparent human relations, that is the possibility of actively changing a social order dominated by the production and consumption of these 'things'. This theory posits a dynamic 'raw' encounter but effectively reifies actual social relations, created and creative social discourse, into an unchanging 'pure' or 'natural' mode of communication. Our humanity has been withdrawn.

Language is a part of a developing human nature; it is our creation. It is possible to foresee a more extensive deployment of creative activity in general communication. In fact this is central to the revolutionary project and the return of human activity to the conscious control of humanity. However, to posit a pure form of communication is to negate the very notion of communication. To commune is to negate and create ourselves, to *realise* ourselves in each other and the world. There is no outside or inside to this process.

We appropriate nature - that is non-human nature, the "synthesis of multiplicity" i.e. everything that is not *us* - as our "inorganic body", rather than developing an abstract, reflected knowledge of it. The development of theory is a part of the *humanisation* of nature.

The artefacts of social production - presently mostly commodities - are resumes of both our *engagement* with our non-human nature - as is changing human nature itself - and so are *a part* of our developing objectivity. To see a non-human reality that has a meaning outside of our engagement with the world is a nonsense. Though it exists, as such, it has no real meaning to us outside of our attempts to make sense of it. The picture of objectivity the Marxists provide for non-social reality is an abstract non-human objectivity, the agent-less space, a social void, where real things happen, a mechanistic causality reigning supreme.

Marx lived in a world of the ascendant bourgeois social order, the growing domination of capitalist relations over those of everyday life. Alongside and intimately bound with its trajectory of conquest, was the triumph of the materialist world view, a view linked with the positivist and empiricist notions of a perceived reality. What appears, *is*. This theory presented the superiority of what is - matter - as the basis of thought. Implicitly thought becomes what isn't: non-sensuous and epiphenomenal.



Contemporary scientific discourse like philosophy, a separation, rather than challenging this vulgar view has intensified it by making the solution of the question 'what is the nature of matter' its *raison d'être*. However, its reading of *nature* has substituted 'thing' for 'process', so the nature of matter is the chase for a sub atomic Ultima Thule: the building blocks of reality. Consciousness, thought, is pushed further back, corralled into a dwindling pen. Now we can improve on the statement 'body is the basis of mind' by substituting 'brain activity' or the operation of 'brain chemistry' and 'neural transmitters' etc. for body. And so mind, thought, remains as epiphenomena.



This argument is taken to its extreme by the followers of E.O. Wilson and Richard Dawkins, by placing human consciousness into a genetic prison, the ultimate empiricism where we are held in thrall to pre or non-conscious drives. Dawkins has gone so far as to postulate, in the best *metaphysical* fashion, a Meme...

Marx argued in the 1840s for a radicalised version of Hegel's dialectical system, where philosophy meets its realisation through its negation. The notion of negation is not the doing away of, in this case, philosophy, but its continued existence in a new arrangement. Marx called on philosophy as the head, the thought of human emancipation; the proletariat - those generally denied the discourse of philosophy - the heart of this process. For Marx philosophy's negation, despite the claims of contemporary Marxian vulgar materialism, is not the end of philosophy, merely its transformation, its *return* to a formerly fragmented social individual. Philosophy as a mode of human existence separate from other activity, is doomed to merely reflect upon the nature of reality. To that extent it is the thought of humanity cast adrift from the rest of life, rather than a critical moment of human activity. "Philosophers have only *interpreted* the world; the point is to *change* it."

One could argue that philosophy as the head and the proletariat as the heart only recreates the Cartesian split. Marx, by using these metaphorical determinates, is trying to point to the necessity for the proletariat, i.e.: the mass of humanity, to [re]discover philosophy in order to negate the separation of mental and manual labour. The opposition of ideas and matter is an actuality as far as it is a part of a particular social relation. And the social relation that these ideas are currently reflective of, capitalism, finds its reflection - its legitimising world view - in the continuing separation of so-called mental disciplines: philosophy, the applied and theoretical sciences etc. "One cannot combat alienation with alienated means." To overcome the separation of mental and manual labour requires more than the radicalisation of philosophy, as its practice is still separated. To overcome it is to realise it as a moment of social humanity within the individual, and that is possible only by philosophy being taken up as a general weapon of radical critique, and thus ending itself as philosophy, an activity apart...

**Saint Johnny Soluble**

# This is not a Commodity in the Supermarket

- always take a book in when shopping. That way your precious life force is not wasted by the inefficiencies of capitalist exchange relations (queues, price checks, clumsy transactions whether electronic or cash). Likewise have a book ready while doing any banking, dealing with any administrators or any companies. Have a book by the phone for a similar purpose.
- shoplift 10% more to make up for GST.
- try to eat as much loose food stuffs as you can in the supermarket. Tell 'em you're only sampling if you're caught. If they try to insist you buy, agree you would - if the product was of a better quality.
- with stuff sold by the bunch, always try to fit 2 bunches into 1 (parsley, spring onions etc.). If caught say you thought it was sold by the kilo - and where are the signs that suggest otherwise?
- with safety pins (good for fashion), batteries, etc. try to break 'em out of the packet and wack 'em in yer skyrocket. If busted claim they're yours.
- for any dealings with authorities have a fake name and address ready at home. Funstoppers ring up and the ask if/what bull shit persons live there and what's the address - there's a list on the fridge with all the relevant info and the house mate trained to oblige the authority figure in question - soon you'll be doing the same for the housemate. This is real good for fare evasion and a step towards communal contestation of the social order.
- admit nothing, expect nothing, take everything.

oh yeah and if you want to bust me for writing this it's all just art mate. I'm just a free form poet and taking political discourses out of context is a recognised widely used post-structuralist technique (which is also what the Latrobe eds should have said). By the way that includes self-reflexiveness to the nth order. So just as dialectical materialist Duchamp signed the urinal I sign:

**Dave Zero**



# S26: Riot in Prague

Last September I was lucky enough to be in Prague to take part in the demonstrations against the IMF and World Bank meetings that were to take place there on the 26th to 28th. This article consists of an account of my experiences in Prague. The next issue of "This is Not a Commodity" will include my analysis of the Prague events and the broader anti-globalisation movement.

Having read about the riots against global capitalist meetings in Geneva in May 1998 and London in June 1999 I was hoping I would be able to get to a similar event when I travelled overseas in 2000. I first heard about the meetings in Prague and the demonstrations planned against them in September 1999 and decided that was the riot for me. A bonus was the proximity to Germany with its 'autonomen', radicals with a long history of fighting the cops, many of whom I expected to be in Prague ensuring something more than the usual boring rally. The big demonstrations in Seattle in November 99 and Washington DC in April last year further increased my anticipation of big things to come in Prague - an international movement against capitalism coming into being.

Fortunately I had no trouble crossing the Czech border on a bus from Munich. The Czech border police also ignored the three dreadlocked young Germans on the bus who were travelling to the protest. However, many potential protesters weren't so lucky. Some accounts suggesting up to 15 000 people were stopped at the border. Many people crossed the Czech border illegally, some with the aid of anarchists from Dresden in Eastern Germany who handed out maps showing where to cross illegally. The English guy I shared a tent with in Prague had hitched a lift with a Czech truck driver and simply lay down on the cabin floor at the border.

There was a Counter Summit in Prague from September 22 to 24 with people from around



the world speaking about the evils of the IMF, World Bank and capitalism as a whole, and what we might do about it. Despite the liberal-reformist orientation of INPEG (Initiative Against Economic Globalisation), the coalition largely responsible for organising the Prague actions, a majority of the speakers I saw at the Counter Summit were revolutionaries. The best speeches came from American autonomist academics Silvia Federici and George Caffentzis, Irish anarchist Andrew Flood and Canadian Naomi Klein who, despite her reformist politics, usually had some interesting things to say.

On Saturday 23 I skipped the Counter Summit to take part in the anti-fascist march. The Czech Nazis had approached INPEG about joining the main demonstrations but were told to get lost. The Nazis were demonstrating against the IMF and World Bank because they

viewed them as Jewish controlled international capital, and were of course in favour of patriotic national capital. Czech anti-fascists have had many fights with Nazis in the past including at least two incidents where firearms were used so they took the opportunity of having lots of foreign comrades in town to attempt to settle old scores. Despite the Nazi's claiming they would mobilise thousands, including many German Nazis, only forty of the 'master race' showed up despite the hundreds of riot cops mobilised to protect them.

About 2000 people, nearly all dressed in black from head to toe, set off on an illegal march through Prague. There was barely a cop in sight. The march was tense with the prospect of immediate deportation for anyone arrested. Some Spanish anarchists wanted to smash a McDonald's but Czech comrades wisely restrained them.

The march finished in Wenceslas Square, site of the 1989 revolution that overthrew Communism in Czechoslovakia. The cops were out in force with cordons in front of McDonald's and various banks, but the crowd dispersed peacefully, preferring to save their energy for the big action on Tuesday.

INPEG had acquired the use of a large abandoned factory that became the convergence centre. In the days leading up to S26 there were many meetings here on topics including first aid, Czech law, self-defence, and most importantly the organisation of the protests. Unfortunately the organisation meetings were marred by the appalling acoustics inside the centre and worse still the ridiculous consensus / spokes-council meeting style imported from the USA. Consensus decision making might be great for a small group of friends but with hundreds of people speaking a dozen different languages it is a recipe for disaster with only the least easily bored sitting through the torturous hours of meetings.

Given these problems it wasn't surprising that the final plan was pathetic. It called for three separate groups of protesters to blockade the entrances of the conference centre - starting about 1 pm - to try and keep the

delegates from leaving to get to the Opera in the evening. Banker: "Oh no the proletariat has kept us from our Verdi, better abolish third world debt and the IMF and World Bank while we're at it to stop such a tragedy happening again." Other problems were the fact that inside the police lines around the conference hall was both a hotel where many of the bankers were staying and a subway station. The black bloc meeting went some way towards overcoming these problems when a Greek anarchist got up and said what many were thinking, something like "we intend to get inside the conference centre and stop the meeting, we are not non-violent."

On the morning of the 26th I awoke in the soccer stadium I was staying in and saw the inspiring sight of the Italian group Ya Basta working on their homemade armour which consisted of thick foam covered with cardboard worn under white disposable overalls leaving them looking like Michelin men and women. The train bringing Ya Basta and other Italians to Prague had been stopped at the border on the 24th with some of the Italians being refused entry because of their police records. In response all 900 people on board had blocked the tracks and said they would stay there until everyone was allowed in. Those of us already in Prague protested outside the Interior Ministry, though since it was a Sunday afternoon I doubt there was anyone inside. All the Italians were let in after 17 hours on the tracks.

Protesters gathered in a square on the morning of the 26th where the 3 separate groups would march to the conference centre to start the blockade. The large contingent from the Socialist Workers' Party had, as usual, provided many protest placards. As the handles were metre long two by fours, many people grabbed the placards for the handy club provided but declined to advertise the SWP by ripping the sign off. Probably one of the best things those Trots have done for years.

Soon after leaving the square at about 11 am the march split into three groups, codenamed 'pink', 'yellow' and 'blue'. The pink group was mostly English and American hippies plus the SWP. The SWP soon abandoned them for the yellow group leaving only five hundred odd people in the pink. Yellow comprised Ya Basta, various small European Leninist/Stalinist groups plus the SWP. A small group of Turkish Stalinists had flags bearing an interesting modification of the



classical hammer and sickle emblem, adding the outline of a Kalashnikov assault rifle. Of course the hammer and sickle emblems were not so amusing to the Czechs and other Eastern Europeans who had actually lived under Communism. The blue group was mostly black clad anarchists. I was with the blue group so my account of what the pinks and yellows did is necessarily second hand.

The pinks got to the conference centre to find only a handful of police blocking their way and advanced right up to the buildings before being driven off by teargas. They then sat down and blocked one of the roads leading into the conference centre and managed to tie up several hundred riot cops who could have been used elsewhere.

The yellow group led by Ya Basta was supposed to blockade the Nusle bridge which went over a valley to the conference centre. They instead tried to push through the police lines. Unfortunately this was unlikely given that the bridge was choked with hundreds of riot cops, a few armoured personnel carriers on loan from the army and numerous police cars and trucks. After four hours of fighting with the police the yellows gave up and returned to the city centre. It was a pity that they didn't leave the bridge as soon as it became apparent that they weren't likely to get through the police lines and attempt to storm the conference centre elsewhere, perhaps alongside the blues.

The blue group was to blockade the intersection of an approach street that led straight up the hill to the conference centre. Instead they marched up a parallel street which wound narrowly up the hill. At the bottom of the hill stood maybe fifty riot police. In an inspiring display of proletarian anger the front of the blue march threw cobblestones and a few Molotov cocktails at the pigs without hesitation as soon as they were within range. They then charged the police lines and engaged in hand to hand combat with the police and succeeded in acquiring a small number of police helmets, shields, and batons.

The police soon brought up a water cannon and two armoured personnel carriers equipped with multiple grenade launchers firing tear gas and stun grenades. The effectiveness of the water cannon at knocking people down from up to twenty metres away meant that breaking through the police lines was unlikely, given the lack of organisation among the rioters. After the initial charge the fighting settled down to a routine of a few people running forward to

hurl cobblestones at the police. The cops replied with volleys of grenades and water cannon if the people were close enough.

At this point lack of organisation became a big problem. If a few hundred people had charged the police at the same time there would have been a good chance of breaking the lines and disabling the water cannon. Despite this disorganisation it still took the police two hours to push us back 200m.

Meanwhile on the street parallel to the fighting more riot cops formed up. If they had advanced down the street they could have encircled thousands of people. Recognising this danger some anarchists started building a barricade in front of some pacifists who were sitting in the street. The pacifists proceeded to dismantle it. The anarchists then moved the barricade behind the pacifists but they attempted to dismantle that barricade as well. With their dogged non-violent stance they were potentially exposing thousands to police beatings and arrest.

As the numbers of the protesters dwindled the police continued to push us back. Several burning barricades slowed their advance, as did the weight of their armour. We were lucky that they didn't have horses or snatch squads which could have led to mass arrests.

Soon a decision was made to march around the hill to the other side of the conference centre and meet up with the pink group and assist them to withdraw safely. At this stage we were down to perhaps two thousand people from a high of maybe five thousand and spread out over a kilometre or more with a succession of barricades protecting our rear.

As we neared the pink group about two hundred people near the front ran up a narrow street. Despite being followed the whole way by a police helicopter they got very close to the conference centre and found only a small group of unarmoured police blocking their way. A few cobblestones saw the pigs off and some people managed to get close enough to the conference hall to smash a few windows and injure a handful of delegates with flying glass. Hundreds of riot police and a water cannon soon appeared which led to a rapid retreat down a steep hill.

After this we continued round to the pink group. We found them sitting down blockading a road with a hundred or so police in front of them. Some of the more hot-headed of the blue group immediately threw cobblestones at the cops over the heads of the sitting pinks but some less foolish blues quickly restrained



them. Those still keen to fight soon found a squad of twenty riot police attempting to move between buildings. So they trapped them at the corner of a building with a hail of cobblestones but the pigs eventually got away.

After an hour or so of discussion between the pinks and blues it was decided to head back to the city centre. The anarchist marching band from Seattle, the Infernal Noise Brigade, reappeared to lead us away. The INB had earlier provided a steady drumbeat to accompany the initial fighting. Some two thousand people set off on the long march back to the centre as night fell. Despite our failure to storm the summit there was a feeling of victory in the air as a relentless drumbeat pounded out, accompanied by a fire breather and everyone punching the sky and shouting out "hey!". The downside was that most of the Prague locals who watched us whether from their balconies or the trams stalled by our march didn't seem to approve of us although a few returned our waves. A few banks along the way had their windows smashed and upon reaching Wenceslas square, the McDonald's at the top of it was immediately attacked and the recently installed extra strong glass proved



to be no match for repeated blows from clubs. Apparently footage exists that shows the first person to attack Maccas later walking through police lines unmolested. The Czech police must be pretty clueless if they think that they need to provoke anarchists into smashing McDonald's.

\* \* \*

After an hour or so of smashing up Maccas, a nearby KFC and a bank, the riot police appeared en masse and I decided to call it a day having thoroughly enjoyed my first riot. Apparently some of the hardcore street fighters kept at it with the pigs until near dawn. When I got back to the stadium I swapped stories of the day's events with a Ya Basta member. When I told him about the Molotovs he said that "I don't agree with using Molotovs but that is a debate the movement has to have."

There were various small demonstrations the next day but I had no intention of going anywhere near them as I figured the pigs would be out for revenge after taking more injuries than the rioters the previous day and hardly arresting anybody. My prediction proved correct as the pigs arrested nearly nine hundred people both at the demonstrations and on the streets if they thought the people in question looked like protesters. It later became known that nearly everyone arrested was severely mistreated in the cells. The pigs beat most of the people arrested. In at least one police station Nazis were let in to beat people, many women prisoners were forced to dance naked for the amusement of the cops and one woman was raped.

Fortunately most people were simply deported after the police had had their fun, with very few charges being laid and to date only one person has been sentenced to prison but with a good chance of getting off on appeal.

The IMF and World Bank meetings on the 27th were very poorly attended because the delegates were scared of further violence. As a result the meetings scheduled for the 28th were cancelled with the ridiculous excuse given that the previous two days meetings had gone so well that they had concluded all their necessary business. So it seems that we

gave some of the politicians and bankers a small taste of the terror they inflict on third world proletarians every day.

**Bastarx**

# Arm the Imagination

Imagine a day where thousands of activists, all dressed up in suits, joined the commuter throng - blending in completely until surreal things begin to occur, like:

1. Planted controversial conversations/heated debates between people who blend into the crowds of commuters spring up in tubes, in cafes, pubs, about the connections between capital, profit, exploitation, and inequality and so on... Invisible theatre.
2. Conferences and special training events take place inside the offices of companies about the damaging effects of the profit mentality and why Capitalism does not work and what alternatives there could be.
3. People on tubes and trains start reading look-alike but propaganda newspapers. Mock pickets crop up everywhere outside offices proclaiming unfair working conditions and exploitation to encourage workers to combat wage slavery and join in.
4. People make GREEDY CAPITAL MONSTERS' - in groups with their bodies and movement and noise - dart in and out of commuters, demanding 'profit, profit, profit'... they could leave a trail of destruction and destitution behind... or leaflets.
5. People on tubes start conversations about going home. 'I've had enough of this commuting stress... this job... there must be more to life than this'... vs automaton commuter mentality... 'turn around, go home... phone in sick/well/dead'.
6. Groups of scattered people take off suit jackets at the same time to reveal slogan t-shirt or bright red blood-stained shirts... stop... put jackets back on and carry on as if all was normal... or hold up boards with slogans or taped to the sides of brief cases in a row... then carry on... A game of MAD ensues; people run around trying to give away blood money to absolve themselves of responsibility for all the evil deeds done in its name. Casino machines appear on street corners... IMF bankers and capitalists giving away countries instead of newspapers.
7. Newspaper sellers start yelling slogans and giving away propaganda mixed in with evening/evading standards... Invisible theatre debates and sketches spring up around newspaper stands; about, for example, profit and control motives for USA bombing of Yugoslavia or how there's a massive crisis on the stock market and it's all about to crash!!!???
8. Trails of blood money and blood are left by people in suits in crowded rush hour periods. Bags of blood money are left lying around, with labels like 'at the expense of the people of central America' or 'Mine, all mine' or 'Don't blame me, I don't know what the board of directors get up to'.
9. Guided tours of the city go on all day - telling the real tales of globalisation and the profit and plunder of capitalism, pointing out the culprits. Some people in big corporations literally get (vegan?) egg on their faces and have to eat PIE. Make the tubes/trains more comfortable, spacious i.e. by blowing up those plastic chairs and sitting down... 'What's the rush for profit... survival of the most economically fittest'.
10. Create your own troops of automaton/capitalist robots in the crowds of commuters to march in step to the beat of 'profit... capital... must work... must obey...' etc. they could even malfunction in busy places??!!

Demand the Impossible! Arm the Imagination!

# Trade Unions versus Working Class Autonomy

This article seeks to draw out the contradictions and limitations of trade unions as a form of organisation of the working class, as seen from the perspective of 'autonomist Marxism.' Autonomist Marxism refers to a variety of thinkers and movements, who have emphasised the autonomous power of workers - autonomous from capital, from their 'official' organisations (unions, along with political parties such as the Australian Labor Party) and the power of particular sections of the working class to act autonomously from other groups e.g. women from men. The interconnectedness of the first two forms of autonomy - from capital and from official organisations - will feature as an important theme in what follows.

Another important characteristic of this tradition is a critique of the tendency of most traditional Marxists to define capitalism more in terms of form than of substance - that is the tendency to focus on what is seen as the specific form through which capital exploits workers: the wage form. Such a reading tends to lead to a perspective which privileges the role of wage workers in the struggle against capital, a perspective which also tends in political terms to privilege the official labour movement, no matter how reformist or bound up with the machinations of capital, as a pole of opposition to capital. As a result, the central political problem of working class autonomy or its lack - particularly whether workers' subsumption to capital is in some way positively linked to their incorporation within a particular organisational form i.e. the trade union - is displaced from the centre of analysis.

An alternative reading of Marxian theory focuses on the substance of the social relationships of capitalism: work. Capitalism is a social system that subordinates all of life to work: a global social factory or workhouse. This process alienates those it forces to work and impedes them from developing their own paths of self-realisation. The subordination of life to work encompasses not only waged work but also the unwaged sector: the work of both women and men in the home, of students and the unemployed, that is the production and

reproduction of labour power as a commodity.

From this perspective, the tendency of 'orthodox' Marxism to privilege and fetishise the role of the official labour movement and its constituent unions in the class struggle is misplaced. It is true that wage-workers possess a powerful weapon in their capacity to withdraw their labour, and clearly the struggles of wage-workers, whether within or against the union, have a crucial part to play in the fight against the despotism of the social factory. However, it is equally true that without the labour of house-workers, the daily reproduction of labour power ends. Without the labour of the unemployed in seeking jobs, and increasingly in such schemes as the 'work for the dole', the labour market would cease to function and capital would have little or no leverage over waged workers. Without the labour of students, schools and universities would close and the reproduction of labour power is stopped. Capital, a social relation of class antagonism, would not continue to function in the face of such a wide range of refusals. There is no privileged site of such refusal - all are crucial, all must confront the web of domination which capital weaves throughout the social factory.

The imposition of work is experienced differently by different sections of the working class - hence organising around the struggle against imposed work must take account of the autonomously defined needs and actions of different groups of workers. At the same time the struggle against the reduction of life to work provides a point of commonality to all sections of the class, thereby facilitating the building of reciprocal or complementary actions and political projects - in short, the circulation of struggles. This provides the basis for fighting capital's divisions, unifying struggles around a common anti-capitalist project.

To return to the question of trade unions, it is clear that their relationship to the revolt against work is a highly ambiguous and contradictory one. Indeed, the relationship of trade unions to the struggle between capital and the working class is riddled with ambiguities and contradictions. And while this applies as well to other major institutions of the

global capitalist social factory - for instance the state - the contradictions take a particularly sharp form in the case of the unions. This is because, on the one hand, unions, or at least those not hopelessly incorporated by either the individual capitalist enterprise or the state, are working class organisations - their reason for being is to represent workers in their negotiations with employers, seeking either to improve, defend or mitigate attacks on their terms of employment and/or exploitation. Indeed, in order to maintain a minimum of support from their membership, or - as is presently the case with US and, to a lesser extent, Australian unions - to rebuild a depleted base, unions at times need to mobilise workers against capital.

There are numerous examples of this in recent years, such as the 1998 MUA dispute in Australia, the recent struggles in the US of auto and construction workers as well as the drawn out strike by the United Parcel Workers, the Liverpool Dockers, Transport Workers across Europe, a major public sector strike wave in South Africa and mass strikes in South Korea, to name only a few of the most prominent.

In the process of negotiating the price of labour within capital, unions also need to reduce the working class to labour power, that is imposed work, which means demobilising working class autonomy if employers are to take the unions seriously. However, the unions must also be able to mobilise workers, but they risk losing control of them, and hence a crucial element of their usefulness to the bosses. In this sense trade unions are an expression of the contradiction of working class autonomy, of a class both within and against capital. Without denying that unions have been involved in major struggles - for instance the major role played by South African unions in the struggle to destroy apartheid - the main role of trade unions has been to represent the working class within capital. Their pivotal function is to reduce the productive power and creativity of the working class into mere labour power, that is the production and reproduction of capital. In the process, human inventiveness and imagination is

converted into the lifelessness of the commodity-form.

Historically, the contradictory role of trade unions becomes even clearer. The post-1945 'Fordist' class compromise - the long post-war boom - was the hey day of social democracy and trade unionism, at least in the 'West'. Profits were ploughed back into industry in order to expand production and raise the productivity of labour, thereby allowing both wages and profits to rise substantially. This process was underwritten by the Keynesian state that, through an active fiscal and monetary policy, maintained rising levels of demand and relative class peace. Thus social democracy and its natural partner, the trade unions, provided the means through which the aspirations and demands of the working class could be harnessed as the motor of capital accumulation. Hence while trade unions were able to win substantial improvements in wages and conditions for workers - and thereby mitigated

the despotism of capitalist imposed work - they also functioned as a barrier to the development of autonomous workers power as the basis of a revolutionary challenge to capital.

This so-called 'golden age' of the post-war years - when wages and profits were both on an upward curve - proved ultimately unsustainable. The social democratic and trade union



mediation went into crisis. From the late 1960s, workers' struggles and demands began to exceed the terms of the class compromise, particularly when - as was often the case - these struggles escaped from, or were even opposed to, the control of unions. The post-war class compromise had reached its limits. As the rate of profit declined, the working class, strengthened by near full employment, went on the offensive; France - May 1968 - was the most acute moment of a global phenomenon. In Australia there was a major upsurge of struggles amongst both the waged and unwaged sectors of the working class in the late-1960s and 1970s. Trade union and social democratic mediation translated this offensive into demands for higher wages and social spending which nonetheless exceeded the growth in labour productivity, thus leading to a further squeeze on



profits. The result was that capital entered a severe global crisis of profitability in the early and mid 1970s, a crisis for capital's ability to command the working class.

Capital's response to this crisis is still being played out. In effect, the managers of capital - both 'political' and 'economic' - sought to turn the crisis against the working class and restore capital's ability to command labour. This continues today. An important element of this response - and one which plagues the world of the early 21st century - has been the rise of global finance capital, through which capital has sought to outflank an entrenched working class. So-called 'globalisation' - shorthand for the intensified discipline of the world market as a means to impose work through crisis - has been used to discipline workers by pitting different national workforces against each other. 'Globalisation' has led to an easing of the ability of capital to circulate globally, with its corollary of the intensification of national governments disciplining the circulation of global labour power. For instance the current creation of the so-called 'illegal immigrant problem' by the Howard government is replicated throughout the world. The 'influx' of immigrants into Western Europe has been a direct result of the West's destructive practice in the former Yugoslavia, the war against Iraq and the collapse of the Soviet Union, to name the most obvious example, and yet its spectacular presentation is always as an abstract 'immigration problem.'

Capital's global circulation, represented by its agents as 'free trade', in actuality has translated into a flight from traditional centres of productive employment - e.g. the destruction and then promised

restructure of the steel works in Newcastle Australia, and the old manufacturing and mining areas in the north of the UK. It is but another means of restoring command through the imposition of crisis and the discipline of competition on the working class. What's more, the increasing use of 'downsizing' and 'outsourcing', such as in the Commonwealth Public Service and in higher education, have been major factors in throwing the union-form of struggle into crisis.

What have been the main trade union responses to these forces? As organisations predominantly within capital, trade unions globally have been among the forces seeking a restoration of inter-class stability, cooperation and conditions conducive to expanded capitalist accumulation, hence the reproduction of life as endlessly imposed work. In Australia during the Hawke-Keating years, this work of rejuvenating the working class for capital was accomplished through the workings of a succession of Wage Accords between the trade union movement and the Labor Government. This committed the unions to wage restraint and productivity improvements in exchange for increases in the social wage that never eventuated. The result was to weaken the working class and prepared the ground for further attacks by the current Howard Government. In effect, however sharply the interests of unions diverge from the current push by government and other employers for decentralised or individual bargaining, they remain committed to the reproduction of capitalist imposed work in the form of improvements in productivity and competitiveness.

The MUA dispute in 1998 illustrates this



contradiction between the union opposition to a particular agenda of the bosses and the continuity of the role of the union as a barrier to the development of an autonomous workers' power. The common depiction of this dispute was of a classic confrontation between labour and capital, in which the latter was unambiguously supported by a government whose main objective was the destruction, or at least substantial reduction, of union power. The lockout and sacking of the union workforce and the government's virulent propaganda campaign against the MUA clearly demonstrate a significant conflict of interest between the union and the combined forces of government and employer.

On the other hand, the MUA - despite its reputation as one of the most militant unions in Australia - was simply incapable, nor did it seem particularly willing, to challenge the capitalist agenda of increasing productivity and competitiveness, an agenda that amounts to the intensified imposition of work. From the beginning of the dispute the union sought, almost exclusively, to merely challenge the government and bosses' legality to side step the union in imposing a settlement. The MUA's leadership stuck doggedly to the position that a union mediated workforce was more than capable of producing the necessary improvements to efficiency in order to become internationally competitive. In other words, as an organisation that represents labour within capital, the MUA fought a rear guard battle on the matter of productivity, since it never challenged the capitalist perspective of work - in fact it was never capable of expressing anything else due to the leadership's cherished position vis-a-vis negotiating with management. In a very real sense then, the dispute was over competing means to the same essential end - the accelerated accumulation of capital through which the further imposition of work is secured. And of course, the restructuring of work on the docks is particularly crucial here, given the strategic position of the industry within the circuit of capital.

Hence, while the outcome of the MUA dispute was widely seen as a partial victory and a vindication of trade unionism - given that the government got a kick in the teeth (a not inconsiderable achievement) and the bosses will have to continue to negotiate with the union - there is no sign that the gruelling intensification of work combined with 'downsizing' endured by dock workers will cease. Indeed the

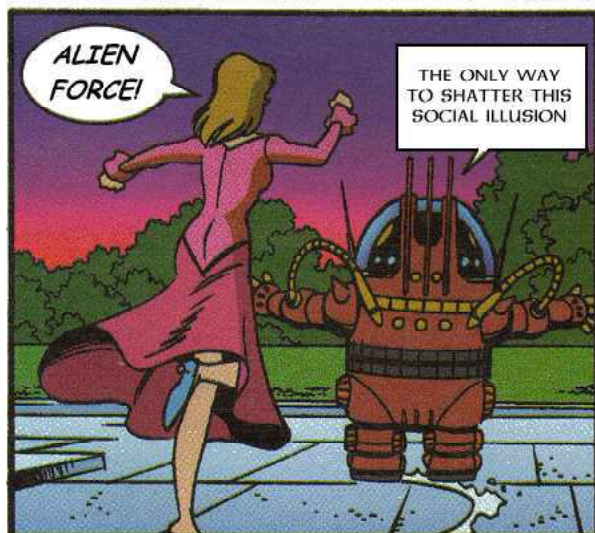
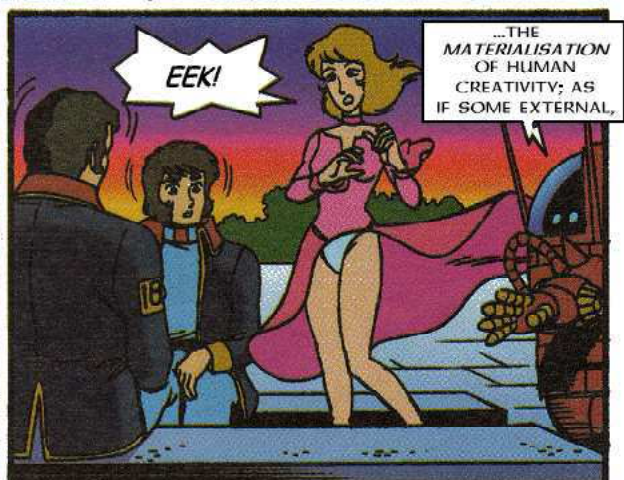
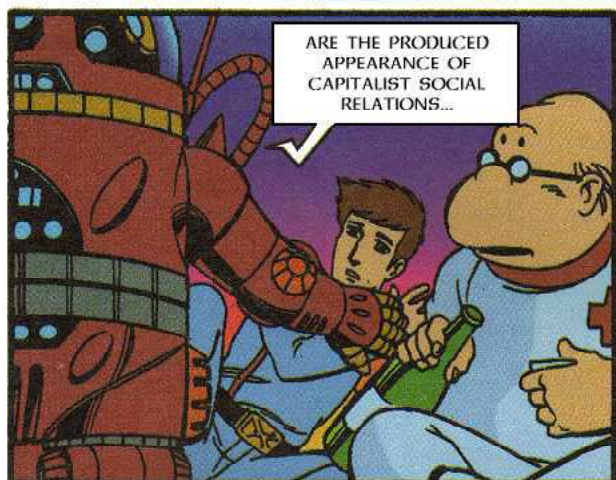
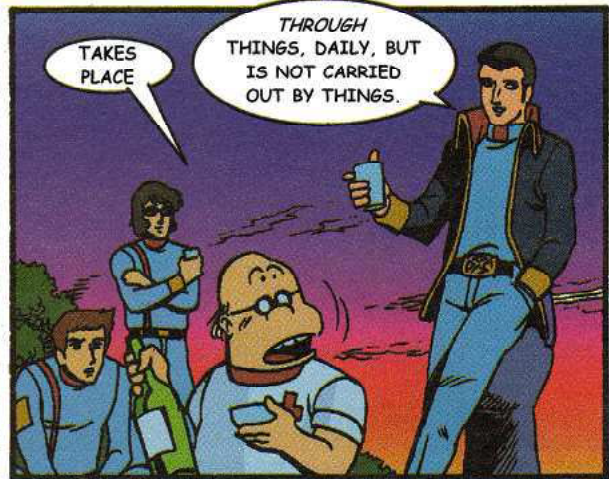
MUA has caved in on most of the employer demands around work restructuring and productivity. Moreover, while the union has managed to preserve its existence as a negotiating agent, this has mainly served to confirm the limitations of an organisational form which - given its role of mediating the conflict between labour and capital under conditions of crisis (including a crisis of mediation itself) - is forced to keep a lid on the class antagonism which it otherwise seeks to harness.

Here we come to the crux of the issue. To the extent that the union, as a particular social and organisational form, contributes in a crucial way to keeping a lid on class antagonism, it blocks the road to the development of autonomous working class power (Lest my argument is misinterpreted, it should be made clear that the Leninist party, far from being the solution to the limitations and contradictions of trade unionism, has its own detrimental effects on the development of autonomy - though for reasons which, due to lack of space, will not be raised here). What's more, social democratic and trade union forms of mediation which suppose a 'national interest' - such as the Australian labour movement's current 'fair trade' campaign - have been undermined by the intensified mobility of money capital. And, on a related note, the totally inadequate response of the union movement to the recent S11 demonstrations in Melbourne provides further evidence of the severe limitations of the trade union as a form of working class organisation.

Time and again the contradiction between working class subjectivity and its representation via unions is demonstrated, in particular due to the inability, inherent in the union form, to give expression to the revolt against the imposition of work. And yet there has been an upsurge of struggles in recent years amongst both the waged and unwaged sectors of the working class - from the resurgence of industrial struggles in the USA to the growing worldwide protest against neo-liberal globalisation, from the revolt of the unemployed on the European continent to the Zapatista uprising in Mexico. As these struggles take place, the working class will increasingly need to confront the ultimately capitalist nature of trade unions and open the possibility of going beyond this form.

**Frankie**







# This is not a Review

“Culture -yuck - the commodity that helps sell all the others.”<sup>1</sup>”

Detoured cartoon c. 1970

Culture - the window dressing for the non-stop cons of capitalism gone madder. When I hear the word culture I reach for my... classless communality of and for creativity. Otherwise, in times and places of overall inertia, dissent finds a conscious presence in cultures where murmurings of different intensities threaten to have an effect. So culture both can not contest class society and can contest class society, it reinforces the rule of power and challenge that rule.

The dialethia of culture takes place through commodity consumption. Rather it seems an instant in what Debord has called the pseudo-cyclical time of capitalism. Unproblematic moments simply succeed each other in the eternal monotony of space and time pointlessly redesigned for commodity consumption. Here the rebel is the hippest product, the hippest product is a bit naughty, and everything, really, is the same. Thus aside from critiques of the tragic incapacity of the image by dialectical materialists like Magritte, culture is not obviously this dialectical contradiction in society<sup>2</sup>. It is tremendously difficult for the contradiction to be detected - including by those with a revolutionary understanding of the social distortion caused by profit.

Appearance is no argument against the contradictory nature of culture. If culture is contradictory all that this standard (and standardly logical) presentation means is that the contradictions have to be uncovered. Further, even the hidden contradiction is echoed through the obviously contradictory attitudes which manifest people's relationship to,

for example, art. Sanctimonious or maudlin rapture versus a weak post structural irony or outright cynicism, with these contradictory tendencies often manifest in a single pathetic individual.

In Canberra I found cultural contradiction most urgent in Odd Productions *Saturation* (6-9th Dec 2000), an extrapolation of some ideas profiled by the underground performative art scene here in the 1990s. The revolutionary currents swirling through Splinter's creation of mini-societies in *Flowers of Gold* (1992) and more conscious in *The Oracle*, *Utopia/Distopia* and the outdoors market place of *Faust* have found some concentration in *Saturation*.

Amazingly, *Saturation's* zone of possibility is a horror movie set, a haunted house. It's a sensorium where bare feet and naked eye overload on different and unaccustomed textures, where the ear is assailed by the bangings, moanings and gongings of a spectral suburban life. It almost must, and does, end with an increasingly frenzied though nevertheless ghostly parody of that life. The parodical element is there from the start in the character of real estate agent Brice Henderson, a yuppie leading the audience through the house, interrupting performers, taking mobile calls shaking hands, but a bodge done on the cheap and in a hurry, who finally belts his head against an air duct proclaiming as a kid he saw his parents do it doggy style.

The written word can not recapture the astounding environment of this *Belvedere*<sup>3</sup>. Nor should it. But the contradiction words can express is that the appeal of *Saturation*,

the critique of the banalisation of space, is not then extended in space. *Saturation* excites by raising the possibilities inherent in transforming a cheap working class house into a living environment about exploration, freedom and then even trauma, but must deny the further reality of this critique of space by its very nature as art. Staging the contradictions at the limits of art, implying the simultaneous arousal and rejection of certain possibilities, places Odd as avant-garde in the proper sense. They are extravagant writer/performers (Annie, Remo, Rebecca come to mind) not towing the post-structuralist line that clashing patterns on wall paper is as subversive as you get. It is not their shortcomings but the limitations existing in a civil situation which make generalising the reclamation of space found in *Saturation* both physically possible, and yet impossible given the lack of control of urban space.

Impossible at least as a dynamically unfolding process instead of another mendacious marketing strategy - Odd themselves effectively comment on 'real estate' as a moment of capitalist commodification. To progress from here it is important to take what Odd accomplished in *Saturation* to heart; to realise the dream of the *Merzbau*<sup>4</sup>. If we as a species can regain control of life through a revolutionary process, cities can be the truly individualised imaginative environments, not the mass marketed *mise en scene* of dead time. *Saturation* should incite riots against the omnipresent identical malls and mindlessly similar homes demanded by the profit imperative. In the meantime

the experience was pleasantly washed down with a few strawberry dacquaries around a luxury chicken coop.

Odd never *explicitly* raise the contradiction of their project, making it all the more important to understand the intervention. The task is, however, equally as obscure where Urban Theatre Projects openly acknowledge their own weakness as artists - supposedly a post-modern innovation - in *Manufacturing Dissent* (Nov 30 - Dec 10, 2000, Performance Space, Redfern, Sydney). This self deprecation is a dim and one sided recognition of the contradictory nature of art<sup>5</sup>. Post-modernism proper does not in fact allow contradictions since it fundamentally depends upon a revamped structuralist logic and not the dialectic. Further *Manufacturing Dissent* is actually damn powerful theatre. Openly raising the shame of the racist Howard government's concentration camps, it ends with a story of our better treatment of migrants in the past. A woman tries to enter a room where she is knocked again and again to the floor. Most of all performative theory becomes a part of the performance; this is the brightest moment of recognition in the piece because the weakness of art is now faced with a praxis. The way is open for change not resignation to art as gutless politic.

So *Manufacturing Dissent* is too harsh on itself. Getting over the fatalistic post-structuralist logic of alterity would be good for those involved. Realising then how radical subjects with revolutionary politics can blithely resist the ruling class scape goating will iron out those pesky artistic inferiority complexes. Similarly our own interventions with the barb-wire barricade at a demonstration against Howard and Ruddock's fictitious 'immigration problem' in Canberra two days later provoked self criticism as a valuable learning device, yet sometimes obsessed with the limits we faced. I got hassled out by right-wingers later that day (but in a really

cowardly way - it took me a while to figure out what they were actually on about). Clearly these shaven-headed bearded bikie wannabes felt infuriated and disempowered by the march and compound (are these guys patched? - what club? - Thor's Fuckwits?).

Change through self criticism in cultural intervention engages the developmental contradiction of culture as radical social change. So the pseudo-differences and pseudo-developments which mark mainstream publication can be nothing more than a shamefaced attempt to prove society and culture as unproblematic and fundamentally changeless. Virtually all the work with any chance of enlivening the future is being done around the cultural underground: groups and individuals not writing to fit some venal style, or big note themselves as culture vultures. The rest have little insight into the possibilities of human life beyond their own bank balances. Often this also involves an unhealthy dose of sex negative ideology i.e. they have to be commodified as stars to obtain genital satisfaction. Syphilis would be better. Grimly these perverts are the revered poets and seers of spectacular society.

On the ground is where its at, man, and groundedness falls away from changeless consumption to a real life of becoming. I'll mention Heather Catchpole's *Time Travel*: mostly new writing using the patterns that can be read into murky photography to illustrate poetry read at different speeds through different font sizes. No titles just the suspension of your Ainslie lounge room and your dreams. Sublate literature and sex. Catchpole works with a taste that burns to undermine the isolation of the everyday. Similarly Count Xtian's *Crime* historicizes ideologies in a mad war of ethnicity, sex and locale. The edge of the world, of our shaking the limits, falls, falls<sup>6</sup>. To bring it into that avalanche Xtian cuts up detective fiction and goes to

ground with Surrealist techniques.

In spite of an air of pessimism, the immediate past of the Canberra cultural underground is besotted enough with actually challenging ideas to be moving consciousness in the right direction - to a socially grounded surety in itself. *Red Thread* and *This is Not a Commodity* are hyperdrive signs in the zodiac. This direction is the florescence of a certain theoretical depth - even many underground milieus are brain dead, simply zombistically enacting what is perceived as culture, or mindlessly following narrowly-defined roles - punk, writer, political activist. Carefully assessing revolutionary theory usually avoids such gangrene. John Rees' *The Algebra of Revolution* represents the latest substantial theoretical intervention from a tendency who have been a force in that same activist-aware milieu, The International Socialist Organisation, and so is a good start for theoretical appraisal.

Following the dialectic through different crisis's Rees presents it in an accessible though not diluted style. The bibliographies are also great; Rees has provided a real resource for the dialectician. It is hard to fault the bulk of his summaries (though John, try to recall Rosa Luxembourg *did* have a critique of the Leninist party) or of his ensuing arguments about method. If you're just starting down the royal road of the dialectic you could do a lot worse than Rees. If, like myself, you've drunkenly stumbled rather than marched down the same thoroughfare for a few years, Rees is a sober companion.

The strengths and weaknesses of Rees book reflect those of his organisation. The ISO are Rolls Royce at quick explanations of Marxism and front line militancy. Broader self consciousness is difficult for the tendency and that's where Rees' loses momentum. Thus Lenin was roundly criticised for a turn to

philosophy. Yet despite defending Lenin's philosophical note books, Rees can't take this up with Lenin's detractors. He uses a secondary source to argue that Lenin was remedying the abandonment of "positivism, scientism and materialism". Given materialism reads straight here, this is a null defence of the urge to theorise - all of these lines of thinking are *inimical* to the dialectic. Conversely and equally as irrelevantly, Rees considers that Lenin theorised simply to denounce "a subjectivist, personal and sometimes religious turn"<sup>7</sup>, tendencies which must be *incorporated* in the dialectic method (we begin with the critique of religion, we place the subject in society to understand how we might maximise the life force of a person).

Likewise Rees is at a loss to justify Trotsky's theoretical streak. While defending Trotsky's formalisation of the dialectic<sup>8</sup>, Rees will not respond to critics who questioned the value of such philosophising. He follows Novack who had "good reason" to be "somewhat surprised" that Trotsky was so fixated with "a correct philosophical method"<sup>9</sup>. Implicitly agreeing, Rees takes the American intellectual arena in which Trotsky was engaged at the time as a fad with a forgone conclusion due to the class nature of the participants. Rees does not integrate the interpretation of the dialectic he considers correct into practise; the Trotsky version of the dialectic is a default mechanism, at best it prevents further distracting deviations.

Rees fails to point out that the flow of theory creates the self-conscious individual who can resist ideology, one working through self-organised revolutionary praxis not negating

activity. The anti-intellectualism of the ISO is their uncomfortable relation to such a person. Too much focus on the thinker and creator undermines their authoritarian organisation. Dogmatic actions around economic issues dominate everything. Still, any hard line on wages and conditions is a vital if not sole point of contest, so I'm glad to have the ISO on my side at rallies and other actions.

The issue of vulgar - straight - materialism is also relevant to Michael Dargaville's latest DIY intervention. *The New Idealism* begins with what has become the weakness of his work in the last few years: New Ageism. The crucial moment in the New Age as for any Fundamentalist religion, is Creationism. Via Creationism a religion can

of Darwin. Changes in and through an environment are replaced by pseudo-change: alien bootleggers, shapeshifters, gift packets of DNA and ancestor figures with vast lifespans. The New Age is a static world view. The way is then cleared for the New Age to replace social struggle by the powers of spiritual beings.

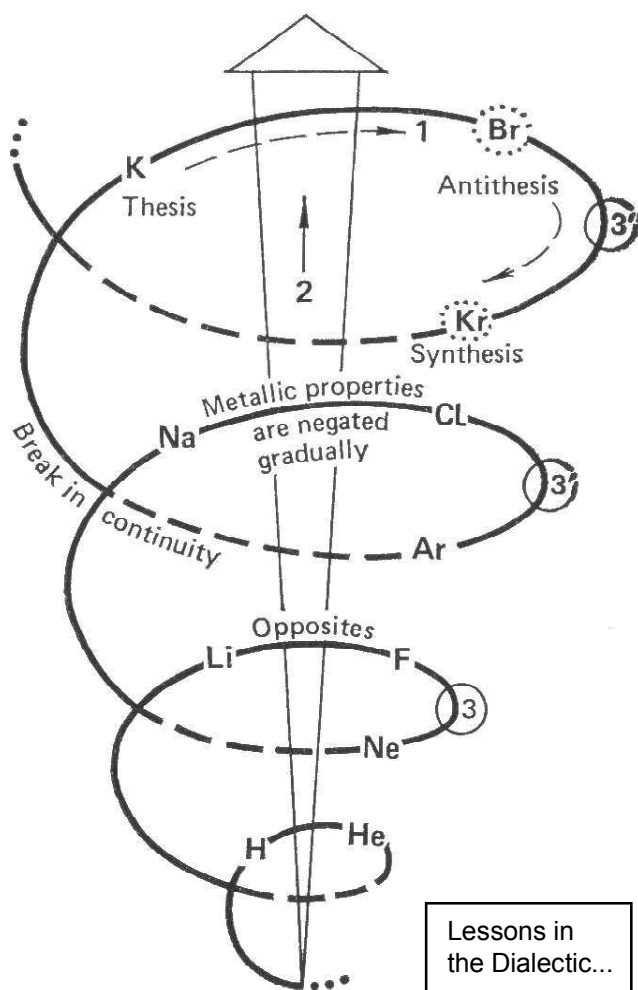
*The New Idealism* picks up the pace and section 1 provides some curt jabs at western philosophy. Dargaville critiques Descarte's separation of a clockwork world from the eternal soul noting a sterile materialism was born<sup>10</sup>. Of course on this one Dargaville is only half right. In fact dualism was (re)born. The spiritual was still there - after all it was experienced but now detached from the world. So alongside the banausic materialism that

informed a heartless science and a heartless society, an ungrounded realm had been set aside for the spirit. Dargaville cannot recognise the spiritual half of the separation for if he did he would see the mirror image of his New Age self.

Because of his creationism Dargaville has already rejected one of the best therapies for this dualism - Darwin. According to Dargaville it was Darwin who sealed the victory of the Cartesian mechanists. While Darwin has been used by positivist theoreticians, evolution is a Trojan horse for Dargaville's avowed enemies. For evolution moved away from a mechanistic to an environmental / developmental model of life, and placed consciousness right back in with biology without denying the reality of

either.

An historicist notion of truth centring on a developing whole was likewise what differentiated Hegel from mechanism. Hegel was

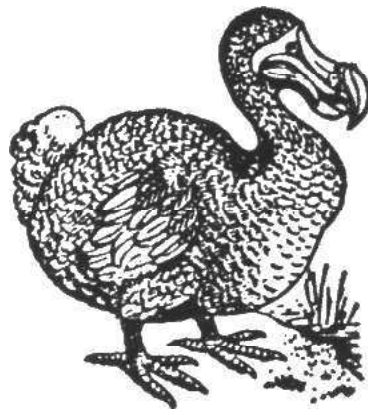


displace history as an explanation of the current situation. Trace the other New Age chimeras back to what they're supposed to justify - in most cases it's a repudiation

an objective idealist, he held matter had an end in this whole, not that it was pure thought (Dargaville gets this wrong). So right after the young Marx took Hegel without the teleology in 1844, Darwin proved a huge boon in linking society and nature. Marx and Engels could then trace the development of consciousness through social forms, which was made possible without denying these forms came to depend on consciousness. Instead of carrying on with their idealist side of the party, New Agers need to recognise dualism had been overcome by the dialectic.

Finally to Dargaville's interpretation of physical theory. Max Ernst's comment that Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle suspended the difference between observer and observed is a good starting point. Ernst does away with neither observer or observed but places each as part of a larger whole<sup>11</sup>. This is a dialectic contradiction because we both have and have not mere separate parts. It's also a much tighter formulation of a "wholeness" interpretation of quantum theory than Bohm's - the latter relies on analogies which Dargaville agrees elide change. Bohm's other formulation is that the parts are only relatively autonomous from the whole, but as Rees has pointed out in *The Algebra...* the central whole/parts contradiction of the dialectic<sup>12</sup> is clearer and, again, less static - the parts must be interacting with the whole and that means change. As the most sophisticated account of society and nature, the dialectic also provides the best logic by which to understand quantum physics.

We need people like Dargaville who get up in the Uni Bar and tell everyone how Murdoch and Packer are a bunch of CIA-loving fascist death suckers. And if he truly wants to trash those guys, Dargaville needs us. 'Cause we did it at S-11 and we weren't even warming up. Likewise for anyone who is serious about a new world: in the drive to recreate the human spirit through the abolition of



class society, there is no aspect of life the group around *This is Not a Commodity* ignore. The attempt to find grounded revolutionary solutions, like the revolutionary assault itself - is total.

**Dave Zero**

#### FOOTNOTES

1. Having dealt with the reactionary ahistoric position "there is nothing new under the sun" Caribbean Surrealist Rene Menil writes: "if we define culture as the ordinarily fetishised tradition of earlier cultural works and forms, it would not amaze us to find that all truly new art affects, perhaps especially in the eyes of 'cultivated people', the appearance of a barbaric style precisely because its newness negates the old formulas" in *The Situation of Poetry in the Caribbean*, p129.

2. For eg. "This is not a pipe" - there are several versions approaching the problem from different sides.

3. I was thinking of the Escher painting of the same name with the impossible architecture.

4. Kurt Schwitters *Merzbaus* were a little like *Saturation*: an environment of draws containing secrets and mementos, later texture growths. A self-haunted house. The Nazis destroyed much of Schwitters work.

5. It's pretty obvious if we get rid of one half of the contradiction (A&~A): art as effective (A) and art as not effective (~A) we no longer have (in)effective art as a

contradiction. The practise of this type of art is either affirmed in a given context (A) or as in the Urban Theatre Project's case, a denied (~A).

6. I have ripped off Werner Herzog's *Heart of Glass*, perhaps to become a big star like Debbie Harry.

7. J.Rees, *The Algebra of Revolution*, London, Routledge, 1998, pp174-175.

8. This can be expressed as A<sup>1</sup>A and is also defended in Rees' daring "Trotsky and the Dialectic of History" in *International Socialism*, 47, summer 1990. The formulation is inadequate however- it just leaves flux - you can't step into the same river even once. Aside from any other problems this pure Cratylean outtake was neither Hegel nor Marx's position on identity and contradiction. For a better formalisation of the dialectic see G Priest "Dialectic and Dialethic" in *Science and Society*, winter, 1989-1990 (a dialethia is just a contradiction). To simplify hopefully without distortion, you have to go from the conjunctive contradiction presented above (A&~A) to that of the form A<sup>1</sup>A. Given this and that we accept contradictions, why not a "second order" contradiction where things are both in flux *and* hold an identity? Priest's article provides a formalisation of and argument for these 2 moves. Rees on Trotsky could be better and more narrowly used as an exploration of what dialecticians mean by "equals", perhaps against still current(!) platonism about mathematical entities.

9. p269.

10. M.Dargaville, *The New Idealism*, Meet Electrified Press, 2000, pp15-16.

11. This approach also informed Ernst's techniques, frottage, fumage etc

12. p.287.



OUR LIFE IS A JOURNEY  
IN WINTER AND NIGHT.  
WE SEEK OUR PASSAGE.

In 1957 a few  
European avant-garde  
groups came together to  
form the Situationist  
International.

Over the next decade the  
SI developed a coherent  
critique of modern society  
and of its bureaucratic  
pseudo-opposition

and the new methods  
of agitation triggered  
the May 1968 revolt  
in France.

WOW!  
WHAT WAS  
THAT?

The Situationist writings  
are the most lucid expression  
of what was being groped for  
in the sixties

and what was  
only superficially  
repressed

in the seventies

and an  
indispensable  
point of departure  
for the adventures  
to come!

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